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LIONEL DEERHURST;

OR,

FASHIONABLE LIFE

UNDER THE REGENCY.

By Barbara Kempsale
EDITED

BY THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE DEERHURSTS.

CHAPTER I.

My father was the son of Sir Roger Deerhurst, a descendant of the Coventry family, who with other young adventurers had accompanied Mr. Clive to India, and during the seven years' war had distinguished himself by his gallantry, knowledge of the oriental languages, and a prudence and self-possession, where interest prevailed, more to be envied than admired in one so young.

At Arania he fought by the side of Mr. Clive, and being the means of preserving that brave Commander's life, was not only presented with a company, but appointed to a place of high trust on the Coromandel coast. There he was soon after united to the orphan heiress of one of

the Carnatic nabobs who had perished in Madras in 1746, when it was besieged by the French. With her Sir Roger gained vast wealth and a splendid residence near Pondicherry. It was said, that not satisfied with these unexpected acquisitions, he not only encouraged, but took part in the barbarous persecutions against the hapless Gentoos, for the purpose of extorting their treasures. For the truth of these reports I cannot vouch, but alas! from earliest youth, I had too much cause to understand his stern, unrelenting temper.

Of Sir Roger's union with the Carnatic heiress, my father Lionel was the only fruit; and as at the age of twelve he appeared delicate, *malgré* the bitter grief of parting from her beloved boy, Lady Deerhurst consented to have him educated in England, hoping that its genial clime would restore his waning strength. Thither Sir Roger accompanied him, placed him at Eton, enjoining that he should be gratified in every whim and caprice his childish fancy might dictate; and then bidding him a fond adieu, returned to India.

Profiting by the indulgence so weakly granted, Lionel, as might be expected became more remarkable for fun and frolic, than attention to study. His cheerful temper, buoyant spirits, and unbounded generosity gained for him the friend-

ship of his companions; and when at eighteen he left Eton to join the —— light infantry, in which he was appointed to an ensigncy, he bore away with him the sincere regrets of the whole college; for even the tutors, however they might condemn his idleness, were by no means proof against the influence of his ingenuous and liberal disposition.

In the light infantry he lost none of his Etonian popularity; his introduction as Sir Roger's heir was favourable; then he was abundantly supplied with money, kept a noble stud, both at the command of his friends, which included all his brother officers, nay acquaintances; to these extraneous advantages, he united a ready playful wit, a fine voice, and was confiding and extravagant to imprudence. No wonder that Lionel Deerhurst was popular. In placing his son in the light infantry, Sir Roger merely intended it as a sort of noviciate in the service, as he himself proposed returning to England, and having him transferred into the Life Guards, which his great interest could easily effect. Besides, he had it in contemplation to reside a few years in Devonshire, where he inherited an ancient though dilapidated estate from his ancestor, the first baronet of his race; but ere these plans were put into execution, the unexpected

death of Lady Deerhurst by some years his senior, produced an alteration in his views.

Pass we over Lionel's affliction for a parent, for whom, even after so long a separation, he entertained the tenderest affection, nor were his regrets tinged by one apprehension of the vast change this event might produce in his own fortunes. Wild and volatile he certainly was, but at this period not selfish. Besides in his uncalculating folly he had acquired the habit of thinking and speaking of his father, then in his forty second year, as of an old man. Thus the idea of his forming another connexion, or entertaining schemes of happiness independent of his thoughtless son, never suggested itself; and he tried to speak of the good old boy—the governor, the wealthy nabob—as of an excellent simple-minded dotard, a mere puppet in his hands, and gave himself no small credit for being so attentive a son, and so regular a correspondent. I must not omit mentioning, that though the — light infantry were justly considered one of the most gallant regiments in his Majesty's service, they were equally remarkable for dissipation. Unfortunately Major Gosshanks, who commanded the dépôt took a particular fancy to my father; and as the Major's proudest boast was that he could drink four bottles of claret at a sitting without

losing his equilibrium, in emulation of so noble an example, my father laid several wages that within a given time he would attain equal perfection in Bacchanalian accomplishments; thus in a wild, thoughtless frolic, originated the ignoble vice, which growing into a habit, laid the foundation of much future misery and degradation.

Early in the year 1773 his regiment was sent to Chester. It proved but a dull quarter; this, added to the languor resulting from dissipation, so *ennuied* Lionel, that on obtaining leave of absence he passed over to Wales, his sole object being to kill time, which unbroken by any powerful excitement already began to feel wearisome. Having loitered through the classic and romantic vales of Clwyd and Llangollen, he then proceeded to the neighbourhood of Cader Idris, and in pursuit of sylvan sports fixed his residence in the village of Plinlimmon. There he met with Mr. Arnheim, the rector of the parish, who invited him to the Parsonage. It was a simple circumstance, yet it sealed my father's destinies.

Mr. Arnheim, though then advanced in years, had been united a few months previously to a very lovely girl—a Miss Vilmont. She and her sister Gertrude were the illegitimate offspring of the late Lord Vilmont, who educated them in a manner, as if he hoped by the brilliancy of their

acquirements, to throw into the shade the unhappy circumstances of their birth. It had been his intention to have given them large fortunes, and to have introduced them into those high circles in which he himself moved; but in the midst of these schemes for their aggrandizement he was carried off suddenly and intestate, while his lovely and accomplished daughters were plunged into the extremest destitution. A distant relative succeeded to the title and estates, who far from extending to them any protection, openly maintained the propriety of discountenancing the offspring of the late Lord's profligacy. Thus, owing to the selfish thoughtlessness of their father, were they obliged to seek an anxious and precarious livelihood in the practice of accomplishments cultivated with a widely different view, till they were relieved from that painful necessity by the union of the eldest with Mr. Arnheim, whose mental superiority compensated for his want of youth and more exalted station.

Had Gertrude Vilmont been less beautiful or fascinating, her misfortunes and dependance had proved sufficient to attach her to Lionel, then glowing with all the romance of youth and inexperience.

The particulars of my father's courtship I never learned; his passion for Gertrude was so violent, that he would have sacrificed every con-

sideration to its indulgence ; but in his mistaken view of Sir Roger's character he anticipated no obstacle to his wishes. From childhood, his every whim and caprice were wont to be gratified, and the idea of being thwarted in the lightest fancy never occurred to him.

Too impatient to wait, during the tedious months which must elapse ere he received his father's sanction from Pondicherry, he urged his beautiful Gertrude to an immediate union. Fondly devoted to her ardent, impassioned lover, "she nothing lothe," consented, and notwithstanding the objections put forward by Mr. Arnheim, the enamoured lovers were ultimately united by him in the parish church of Plinlimmon.

A year passed off happily, during which time, under various pretexts, Lionel postponed announcing his nuptials to Sir Roger ; and as Gertrude's figure, albeit her blushes, held out a fair prospect of her soon becoming a mother, confident as he was, he began to fear that he had been too precipitate, and that Sir Roger might take umbrage at a step, which he even to himself acknowledged to be thoughtless ; for while Gertrude's love daily increased, his declined in an equal proportion ; and this feeling of discontent was kept up, and aggravated by the frequent visits which he made to his corps, still at

Chester, where his return was ever hailed with pleasure, as being the best and jolliest fellow at the mess.

Thus months rolled on imperceptibly, when Lionel was roused from his reckless indifference, by receiving a letter, announcing at once his father's arrival in England, and his own appointment to a company in the — light infantry, and also requesting that he would lose no time in joining Sir Roger in London. In compliance with this request, Lionel hastened to meet that parent from whom he had been so long separated, and of whom he had formed so erroneous an opinion ; while as the event proved, Sir Roger was equally mistaken in the view which he had formed of his son.

This interview, the exact particulars of which I have never learned, proved fatal to my father's prospects ; nor were the circumstances under which it occurred, such as to lead to favourable results. They met under a restraint ; both had a painful duty to perform—a secret to disclose, of the reception of which by the other, each was dubious. Lionel had to announce to his haughty and imperious father his union with the penniless offspring of shame ; while Sir Roger had to apprise his sarcastic and volatile son of his approaching marriage, with one young enough to

be his daughter; for the business which had brought him so unexpectedly to Europe, was to make some arrangements preparatory to his nuptials with the lovely daughter of Admiral Eustace. Besides, Sir Roger was disappointed, cold, proud, and pompous, a lover of forms, and of the old regime; he was offended, nay often shocked at the bold, reckless, dissipated character of his son.

A deficiency of moral excellence he would have overlooked as a matter of indifference; but Lionel's swearing and drinking, his noisy and pointed sarcasms, while they were repugnant to the Eastern Nabob's refinement, constantly wounded his self-love; and far from finding pleasure in the society of an only son, from whom he had been so long parted, he felt ill at ease in his company, and was relieved by his absence.

With such sentiments, he received with pleasure the intelligence that Lionel must proceed to St. Domingo with his regiment. Nor was this change in his movements displeasing to the latter, as it placed it out of his power to postpone any longer that disclosure from which the stern, ungracious manner of Sir Roger, had hitherto deterred him. He was, indeed, conscious that he had made but little progress in Sir Roger's affections, as in one of his letters to my mother at this period, he writes thus:—

“There is one great cause of discontent between my father and me, which all Mr. Arnheim’s wisdom will fail in removing. I consider him a vast deal too young, and he esteems me a vast deal too old; and this I verily believe is the head and front of a misunderstanding, which, though never expressed, certainly exists between us.”

As the time of Lionel’s departure drew nigh, and the prospect of being rid of his irksome presence appeared more certain to Sir Roger, he softened considerably in his manner, and gave unto his son several proofs, if not of his affection, at least of his wealth. This liberality unmanned my generous and reckless father more effectually than all the Nabob’s coldness and sternness, so much so, that when the night before his departure arrived, with the tale of his marriage still untold, he was so overpowered by his fears, that he had recourse to wine to sustain him through this trying ordeal. In the extremity of his moral cowardice, he quaffed glass after glass; and, in the height of his intoxication, forgetful of all respect, waiving all preface or apology, he boldly announced his marriage, nothing extenuating. How he commenced his acknowledgment, how defended it, he knew not: there was some attempt to laugh it off, to be witty, to boast of the coming heir, the embryo

bridegroom's grandson ; but of the particulars his deep potations left no recollections.

Oceans of wine, however, could not wash out from his memory the consequences of that interview ; ages of intoxication would fail to neutralize their effect upon his destinies. Every darker passion in the breast of Sir Roger, fostered and fomented by a protracted residence in tropical climes, and by the exercise of an uncontrolled will, was roused ; and not finding vent in a nobler outbreak, which the violence of Lionel prevented, settled into a deep and inextinguishable hate, a father's hate, and the only words which he used, the last words which my wretched parent ever heard him utter, rang in his ears until his latest hour.

“ Boy,” said he, “ though time should last to eternity, I never can, I never will forgive you : nay, I shall never willingly see you more. You have trampled upon every principle of filial duty and affection ; you have taunted and insulted an indulgent father ; you have disgraced an ancient family by marrying a bastard ; you have snapped asunder the slender cords that bound us together, and now abide the consequences.”

Strange how a few short hours can alter the whole aspect of our fortunes. Death itself could have hardly effected a more striking change in the living man than did that interview in the prospects of

Lionel Deerhurst. He arose, next morning; yet oh! how different. But yesterday, the expectant heir of thousands, the favoured child of fortune, the son whose every wish was no sooner uttered than gratified; to-day, disinherited, bearing about him the intolerable burthen of a father's wrath—the wretched victim of weakness and intoxication.

As he sat striving to remove the weight upon his heart, by indulging in sanguine hopes of Sir Roger's relenting, the illusion was at once and for ever dispelled by receiving a letter, reiterating all that the exasperated father had uttered the night before, announcing his fixed resolution to disinherit him, and peremptorily banishing him for ever from his presence. At the same time he received from his agent the intelligence, that a small annuity had been settled upon him, beyond which, he need not look to Sir Roger Deerhurst for countenance or support.

The effect of this intelligence upon Lionel was other than might be expected. Conscience, that busy tormentor, was soothed and set at rest; indignation at his father's unnatural sternness and injustice took the place of remorse at his own folly. Pride, the pride of one, before unthwarted in his slightest wish, banished from his breast every thought of seeking a reconciliation; and

dejected, not humbled, he hurried down to Plinlimmon to take a hasty leave of the loved cause of all his misery.

It was in vain my mother importuned to accompany him to St. Domingo. The arguments of Lionel, Mr. Arnheim, and her devoted sister, overpowered her entreaties; and with a bursting heart, she saw my father depart to drown the memory of his ruined fortunes in the wild excesses of tropical dissipation. The shock of his departure, and grief at their altered prospects, were the occasion of my unexpected appearance under such gloomy auspices; a mother's tears were mingled with my infant nutriment, and the first sounds that broke upon my ears, were the heart-broken sighs of the forlorn wife.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY in the spring of 1782, my father again visited Cader Idris, after an absence of nine years, an interval which I pass rapidly over, as generally unmarked by any incident of importance. Two events had, indeed, occurred which exerted a powerful influence over the interests of our family. Immediately on his return to India, after the unhappy rupture with his son, Sir Roger Deerhurst's nuptials with Miss Eustace were celebrated. The Madras Gazette, in which the intelligence reached England, entered into an elaborate description of the gorgeous *trousseau* of the bride, and the magnificent preparations made at the palace of Pondicherry for her reception. All this had sunk deeply into my father's breast, and seemed to shut out all prospect of reconciliation with his unrelenting parent.

The other circumstance which I have to mention, though of a widely different character,

exercised a still greater influence upon my destiny. It was the birth of Clara Arnheim. This event was as joyful as unexpected, since many years had elapsed from Mrs. Arnheim's marriage, ere she was blessed with this new claim upon her affections. All seemed to participate in the pleasure afforded by the appearance of the little stranger. Lord Plinlimmon acted as godfather; her Ladyship insisted on supplying the tiny wardrobe; in a word, the Parsonage was one scene of joy and congratulation. All this operated powerfully on my boyish fancy, and the earliest sentiment of which I can recal the memory, was that of love for my baby-cousin. Oh! that I could bring back those hours of innocence in which I used to rock the lovely child in her downy cradle, fondly sport with her, as she rolled upon her mother's lap, or hold her on my mountain pony; while Llewellyn (Llewellyn was my nurse's son) used to stand at its head. But why loiter over scenes never to be recalled, the bare memory of which fills my saddened soul with anguish?

My father's return to Cader Idris had been occasioned by his promotion to a majority in the — foot, and as his regiment was under orders for embarkation, his arrival was the signal for my mother's departure and mine; a parting, the

anguish of which is still fresh in my memory. To be brief, soon after our arrival at Gibraltar, my mother's health rapidly declined; and notwithstanding the genial air of the south, she fell a prey to hereditary consumption. This sad event was accelerated by the intelligence that her beloved and only sister, Mrs. Arnheim, had expired in giving birth to a still-born child.

After an absence of some years in the south of Spain, my father and I arrived in England, and without further delay hastened to the Parsonage. Oh! never shall I forget my youthful ecstasies as I caught the first glimpse of the cherished scenes of my childhood.

The manse was erected at the extreme end of a small thickly wooded dingle at the base of Cader Idris, whose craggy heights formed a gigantic bulwark to protect it from the frequent storms which blew over the long range of mountains, extending from the sea-coast to Plinlimmon. A clear trout-stream, which borrowed its silvery waters from the Diswyney, ran bubbling on, and the more distant but imposing view of Lord Plinlimmon's ancient castle, with its fine parks, and extensive woods, a residence worthy of its noble proprietor, are the features of the landscape most prominent in my memory. Amid objects so magnificent and imposing, few would have passed

to gaze on the pastor's modest glebe of unhewn stone, built in the simplest style of architecture. The only attempt at ornament consisted of a verandah surrounded by, and supporting a variety of exquisite plants, whose gay blossoms gave a graceful and cheerful appearance to the otherwise sombre building; besides at either side of the front entrance were stages of rare exotics—Clara's peculiar charge.

While I hurry on to the stirring incidents of my life, let me dwell on the days of happiness passed with Clara Arnheim. Our numerous excursions up the hoary sides of that old mountain where we used to wander for hours and hours, in all the dreamy rapture of first, of boyish love, free from the slightest taint of selfishness or sense; not a dell, not a lake of that strange mountain did we leave unvisited. And oft used we to wile away those blissful hours in telling curious legends of the holy Druids, who offered up their strange and horrid vows within the huge circles that seemed of nature's workmanship, and with which old Cader Idris abounds; or tired of that, used to draw forth the echoes of the mountain with my bugle, the sounds of which revelling through all the cliffs and fissures of the rock, were told back a thousand fold, and soothed, while they amazed, the youthful Clara.

Where now is that fair girl, just emerging from the joy of childhood ; those cheeks of velvet softness, are they to tingle with the blush of shame ; those eyes of intense azure, are they to scald with tears of hopeless misery ; those silken sunny locks, to hide the heavings of a bursting heart ? Can the destroyer find aught to work upon 'mid such sweet innocence ? Out upon these thoughts, they drive me to despair.

Two years flew rapidly by — oh ! how rapidly, and we were entering on the third ; another happy year, when I was summoned to join my father, who had been for some time with his regiment in Cork. Arrived there, I was placed under the charge of a Mr. La Franck, an accomplished scholar, and friend of Mr. Arnheim. There I contracted an intimacy with my preceptor's son, Thomas La Franck, and with his pupils, Charles Mellish and George Tennant. The whole attention of our worthy tutor was devoted to our instruction ; and as we were each without brothers, we soon became linked to one another in the closest friendship. La Franck and Tennant were studious ; Mellish and myself, idle : thus in the mornings, we paired off, while in the evenings, we were rarely found apart. Our chief amusement was rowing on the Lee in a boat placed at our disposal by Tennant's father, who

was a considerable ship builder; and my proficiency in music, thanks to my long residence in the south, proved no slight acquisition on such occasions.

To my skill in music I owed many an agreeable acquaintance; but none whom I valued more than Mr. Tennant, my schoolfellow's father. In music he excelled, and being pleased with my proficiency, I became a constant visitor at his house, situated on Glanmire water. How many happy days have I passed under that hospitable roof! How well I can recal to mind its gentle and amiable mistress, and oh! how vividly are my recollections of her daughter, Aigline Tennant, then beaming with youth and innocence; so joyous, so mirthful, and yet so sylph-like, as to seem formed of some finer element than the gross earth.

CHAPTER III.

I PASSED four years of boyish indifference and enjoyment in Cork, unmarked by any event of interest. The warmest friendship subsisted between the four *élèves* of Mr. La Franck; and I passed all my vacations and holidays with the Tennants. My strong, though childish, passion for Clara prevented any warmer feeling than affection springing up between Aigline and myself; and I listened without jealousy to Mellish, as he poured into my ear the confession of his boyish love for her.

In the wayward course of a soldier's life, my father was now obliged to proceed with the regiment to Barbadoes; and fearful of the consequence of a tropical climate on my yet unformed constitution, he resolved to send me back to Cader Idris to continue under Mr. Arnheim's care, till an opportunity offered of procuring me a com-

mission for the army, which was my ultimate destination. The journey from Cork to Cader Idris, was tedious, embittered by my regrets at leaving my friends the Tennants, which even the joyful anticipation of again seeing Clara Arnheim could not altogether assuage.

At length arrived, I alighted at the rustic gate, and entered into the small lawn, adorned by its knots of flowers and shrubs. The harvest moon, in the full refulgence of its glory, shed its softened light around, leaving the craggy heights of Cader Idris in partial shadow. The transparent stream which rushed sparkling by, and which, as Clara used sportively to remark, seemed only to diverge from its parent river to enliven the scene; the rich balmy air, redolent with the perfume of a thousand heaths and flowers, the last vespers of the birds, and oh! far beyond all in loveliness, the tall graceful form of Clara in her drapery of white, standing in the parterre collecting blossoms, which on seeing us, she cast away to bound into my father's arms, then into mine. Oh! it was a moment of rapture, that seemed a foretaste of heaven. But, alas! a gloom overhung the once cheerful Parsonage in consequence of the feeble state of Mr. Arnheim's health, who was threatened with the greatest of human privations, the loss of sight; and even his Christian

piety could not altogether prevent the effect of this calamity weighing on his spirits.

Never did Clara appear to greater advantage than now, as angel like she ministered to her father's wants, reading and writing for him daily. The whole care of the domestic arrangements devolved on the gentle girl, in which task, however, she was much assisted by the activity of a young Welsh girl, Janet Owen, whose attachment and fidelity to Clara made me regard her with interest. Mr. Arnheim, perhaps, apprehensive of the affections of his daughter becoming engaged to one whose close connexion rendered such a result most undesirable, now exerted himself to get me into the army, and at length succeeded in a manner he had least anticipated. His intimate friend and patron was Lord Plinlimmon, who having held a high official position in India, had there become acquainted with my inflexible grandfather. Through this favourable channel, intelligence was conveyed to Sir Roger of my position, and extorted from him that, which under other circumstances, I would have rejected with scorn, an order on his agent in London for one thousand pounds. Thus it was the haughty Nabob dealt out his churl's pittance to the heir of his first-born, while with all the weakness of a dotard father, he lavished on the

offspring of his second marriage every indulgence. My father's half brother, Etienne Deerhurst, was now openly recognised as the expectant heir of all Sir Roger's treasures; and in the bitterness of my heart, I could hardly refrain from venting curses on this odious supplanter—for as such I regarded him.

On receiving Sir Roger's gift, Mrs. Arnheim proposed my immediately proceeding to London; and on the eve of my departure presented me with a valuable watch and some books, advising me by all means to cultivate my musical talents, as they would prove a resource to keep me from dissipation. Clara, too, collected her treasures, to present as parting remembrances, permitting me to cut off a ringlet of her bright hair; and when in the anguish of my burning soul, tortured by the conviction that the Parsonage was no longer to be my home—my blissful home—I bitterly accused her of not regretting me, sweetly, caressingly, the gentle girl said: "Freville, though you say it, you cannot believe that I do not deeply regret you, my earliest companion, my cousin, and my friend." Oh, how calm and passionless did these words appear to my almost frantic feelings! and when, on the following morning, the hour of separation was announced, and that she threw her arms around me, sobbing out,

“Dear, dear, Freville! adieu—farewell!” I lost all control, and clasped her with transport to my wildly throbbing breast; then, overcome by emotions, uttered a groan, reeled, and must have fallen, had not Mr. Arnheim sprang forward, and supporting me in his arms, placed me in the chariot. Ere I recovered from my insensibility, the heights of Cader Idris—that memory-mark of many an hour of happiness—were only visible in the distance.

CHAPTER IV.

MY first care on reaching London, was to inquire after Sir Roger's English agent, Mr. Moneymore, on whom my draft for a thousand pounds was drawn, and who I expected would interest himself in the purchase of my commission. As to Mr. Arnheim, he was totally unacquainted with the details of business ; and my noble friend and patron Lord Plinlimmon had departed for Florence to join his lady.

I experienced disappointment on finding that Mr. Moneymore had left town, and was not expected to return for some months. I lost no time in acquainting Mr. Arnheim of his absence, entertaining a wish that he would invite me to return to Cader Idris ; far from it, within a few days I received his answer, which breathed the spirit of paternal love. He said that he deeply regretted being by circumstances prevented from requesting

me once more to make the Parsonage my home ; but that his health declined so rapidly, his physician pressed the necessity of change of air, and he only waited until he could prevail upon some clergyman to perform the duties of his parish, when with Clara and Janet Owen, he would proceed to Swansea. He added,

“ I leave this in the vain pursuit of health, to satisfy, or rather divert, the tender solicitude of my beloved Clara ;—her *young hopes* are sanguine of my recovery ; but, Freville, I am not self-deceived, and feel that I am rapidly approaching man’s final bourne.”

This letter afflicted me, for I experienced a filial affection for Mr. Arnheim ; but at the period, my hopes, too, were young, and I satisfied myself that his apprehensions of immediate death were hypochondriacal.

The next two months were passed by me in lion hunting ; and as this method of killing time is in London a very expensive mode of idling, my finances, never very flush, were reduced so quickly, that notwithstanding my disinclination to move, I was obliged to decamp from my apartments in Sloane Square, and mount into a dingy garret in Oxford Street. All this time I had not heard of the Arnheims ; they had either forgotten my existence, or neglected me ; I had then no other friends

but the Tennants, and they had become as a memory of boyhood ;—but young Hope was still mine, and unappalled by my friendliness or poverty, she flitted around my path, gently leading me to despise the present, in planning for the future. Love and Clara,—for in my bosom they had merged into one,—hovered over my pillow, soothing not disturbing my slumbers ; then came less exciting pleasures, in the form of gold epaulets, flashing swords, waving plumes ; in short, the whole paraphernalia of military and aid-de-camp finery spread their gaud before me ; and then, my extraordinary merits must of necessity crown me with a hero's wreath of victory ! Well, these day dreams are the sweet blossoms of youth and inexperience,—pity that they soon wither before the storms of life ; for me these rainbow colours suspended in ethers far above earth's grovelling atmosphere, began to pale before the grim countenance and discontented murmurings of my most puissant hostess of mount garret. For the last few weeks she had pointedly animadverted on the largeness of my appetite ; I should restrain it, she advised, for it led to consumption. The laugh with which I received this startling intelligence offended the dignity of this dame of Oxford Street, and with

less courtesy, she loudly intimated that to check the innovations of the aforesaid consumption, she recommended, nay insisted on, my trying a change of abode. Now, as she was a great personage within the compass of her lodging-house, her commands were imperative, and my position became most embarrassing. Money I had none ; seduced by the witcheries of Imagination, I had banished Reason and her hand-maiden Prudence ; and, while the needful lasted, scattered it freely—too freely ;—then when it was gone, admitted my mortality by parting with the better part of my wardrobe to satisfy my good appetite, which was as imperative in its demands as my fierce hostess. It is in vain that we poor mortals struggle to etherialise our being—“ After all we are but men.”

My dilemma was relieved by seeing among the fashionable intelligence of the newspapers, the arrival of Simon Moneymore, Esq., at his town residence, in Portman Square. I concluded the pompous announcement was to give notice to his clients ; however, to me it was most satisfactory.

I had too overweening an opinion of my own position, to value Sir Roger’s man of business, except so far as he might prove useful ; still as he resided in a fashionable locality, I wished to appear to the best advantage. But with all my

ingenuity, aided by a red haired damsel, who with the speed of a Mercury, and the diversity of a Proteus, fulfilled the various duties of cook, butler, house-maid, porter, and abigail, I could scarcely attain in my dress to the shabby genteel. I was attired in a pair of nankeen tights, so tight that I could with difficulty step forward, (their scanty length disguised by a tolerable pair of Hessian boots), an old embroidered military surcoat of my father's, a purple *choker* exquisitely tied, and carried a richly gemmed bamboo sword cane, valued by me as being the only Oriental gift I had ever received from Sir Roger.

What with the consciousness of possessing one thousand pounds, and the admiration of the red haired damsel, rather energetically expressed, with an air of self-satisfaction, and a short mincing step—for alas! the nankeens set haste at defiance, I moved slowly forward, gracefully dangling my cane.

All fops are absurd; but your shabby-genteel fops are grotesque.

On reaching Portman Square, I was surprised at the splendour of the mansion—the dignified deportment of the fat porter, as he stared at me through his spectacles with a look which seemed to say, ‘what can be the business of this shabby fellow?’ and the more insolent regards of the tall

thin footman, as elevating his glass, he lisped out :

“There is some mistake here. Fellow, what do you want?”

This rather confounded me, and in a hesitating voice, I said, “If this is Mr. Moneymore’s residence, and he is at home, be so kind as to acquaint him, that by an order from Sir Roger Deerhurst, I have called upon him.”

“And who are you?” sneered the footman, “to give me this trouble? Fellow, go to Mark Lane office :” and he opened the door.

My anger was raised,—pushing him aside, I called out, “I am Mr. Deerhurst, quick! how dare you loiter?”

My name, added to my decided manner, acted like electricity on the servile menials: the fat porter deferentially handed me a chair; the thin footman skipped up stairs—how I envied him the loose green velvet breeches, which admitted such freedom of limb!—the next moment he returned, and with the skip and grin of a monkey requested I would go to the saloon, where Mr. Moneymore would attend me.

I mounted the marble staircase cautiously.

“Mr. Dēerhurst, I fear you have hurt yourself?” said the obsequious footman.

“Not so!” I replied, “but as you may observe,

I wear *tights*," and I burst forth into a fit of laughter, at the look of scorn he cast on my dress as he flung open the door of the gorgeous saloon fitted up in Eastern fashion. Several of the superb ornaments bore our family crest, from which I concluded they were presents from Sir Roger.

In a few moments Mr. Moneymore entered: he was very tall, perruqued, frilled, perfumed, the very personification of conceit. You felt at one look that he was vulgar and affected. He advanced towards me with a sliding step, a simpering air, and his long back bending forward into a curve. Reaching out his hand, he cried:—

"Mr. Deerhurst, most welcome; from my valued friend and noble patron Sir Roger Deerhurst's letter, I was not prepared for so early a visit; but, of course, you understand, that during your sojourn in London this house and all within it are at your command: that is, if such poor accommodations as it offers are worthy of the honour of your presence."

With difficulty I restrained my laughter, as I recollected my sordid garret in Oxford Street. Without accepting the offer, I made an appropriate answer, much wondering at the motive which led to Mr. Moneymore's flattering reception. There was a silence, during which I ob-

served that he attentively scanned my appearance. He interrupted my ruminations, saying :—

“Yes, Mr. Deerhurst, you have a resemblance, though not a very strong one, to my esteemed friend and generous patron, Sir Roger.”

“To that, then,” I cried, “I am to impute your hospitality ; still I must apologise for pressing on your notice the motive of my visit. Perhaps at present it may not suit your convenience, but circumstances have brought me to such a position, that I fear I must trespass on you for an immediate attention to Sir Roger’s order.” I spoke these words in a hesitating tone.

“I do not, Mr. Deerhurst, perfectly comprehend you,” said he ; “your words are incoherent, and you speak doubtingly of accepting my hospitality. Sir, my father, and, consequently, myself, owe our prosperity to Sir Roger, my esteemed friend and noble patron. Mr. Deerhurst, none but fools are ungrateful ; but sit down, I shall presently show you Sir Roger’s letter, announcing that you were to visit me. First I must order preparations for your reception. We bachelors,” and he gave a smirk of self-satisfaction, “are sometimes at fault ; but ha !” and he jumped with a theatrical air, “what am I about ? Now that I hear my chariot, I recollect that when you were announced I was engaged

at my toilette, being invited to dine with Lord Beletrieve. No small honour, my young friend—for such as me,”—and he gave me a sentimental squeeze of the hand, “for his Lordship, the most fastidious nobleman in England, admits none to his table but the *élite*; his mansion is the very emporium of grace, fashion, and luxury.”

“Let me intreat of you, Mr. Moneymore, to keep your engagement. I can attend you to-morrow.”

“*Mon dieu!* Mr. Deerhurst, you attend me? keep my engagement? and leave you? impossible! But excuse me while I write an apology.”

As he wrote, I surveyed him with a strong inclination to laugh in his face; he wore a flowing peruke of a strange fashion, but bearing some resemblance to those I had seen in the pictures of Sir Peter Lely. Between it and his immense roll of cravat stuck out his long hatchet-shaped visage; and, if my nankeens were tight, his fell like bags over his fleshless calves; his vest was of white satin, and his coat of the finest material, but all so elaborate, so studied, he was such a caricature, that I inwardly vowed to renounce foppery, and leave its details to footmen and *parvenus*. As these observations flashed through my mind, I felt well contented with my seedy

garments, rather considering them as a gentlemanly distinction.

Having despatched his answer to Lord Beltrieve, he took a seat next to me, and then, solicitous to impress me with an idea of his consequence, all evidently depending on his acquaintance with the *great*, burst forth into a history of their politics, habits, talents, vices, the latter of which seemed to have fascinated him. Positively he had the whole peerage by heart. As to his words, they rushed forth with the force of a mill-stream, and under the appearance of refinement and affectation, he was painfully gross. Before two hours had passed I detested the fop; still he was amusing.

Taking advantage of a pause in his conversation, I said: — “Excuse me, Mr. Moneymore, but amidst all the nobles and high dames of whom you have spoken—not, I must say, that you have by your revelations elevated that distinguished class to my view—how comes it that you make no mention of Lord Plinlimmon? I understood that he was one of the most distinguished noblemen in England, not only by position and superior talents, but for strict morality.”

“Strict morality!” he reiterated, with a sneer; “pshaw! but you are a youth totally unacquainted with life.”

“Then,” I exclaimed in a tone of vivacity expressive of mortification and surprise, “you do not consider Lord Plinlimmon a strictly moral man, or one of superior intellect?”

“Excuse me, Mr. Deerhurst, but positively you misunderstand my meaning: undoubtedly Lord Plinlimmon is one of the very best men in England, a beau-ideal of nobility that would have satisfied La Fayette, or any other romancer of the French revolutionists, a saint that would have been canonized in former ages; but, Mr. Deerhurst, all these sublime qualities are very well in the perspective—to be looked forward to as gracing the residue of life, when the passions are cooled, and the effects of time stealing over our personal attractions,” and he cast a look of self-complacency over his figure; “but in youth, Mr. Deerhurst, fashion—mysterious, omnipotent fashion, should be the high mark of our ambition.” As he spoke, there was such an air of apish vanity and self-conceit about him, that I felt a violent inclination to knock him down. Without waiting for an answer, he continued: “Of course, as it is Sir Roger’s wish, you can call upon Lord Plinlimmon; but, Mr. Deerhurst, humble as I am, I flatter myself that through my means you may be introduced into the Beletrieve set; indeed, immediately upon receiving Sir Roger’s letter, I mentioned to my noble and

honoured patron, Lord Beletrieve, that I should request that favour, and he has kindly consented."

I coloured with vexation, at the idea of being received into society through Mr. Moneymore's intercession, and, with great *hauteur* answered :

"If it is, indeed, Sir Roger's wish to have me introduced to Court—though I must say I am at a loss to understand this sudden change of measures—I have no doubt that Lord Plinlimmon, from the friendship he has always shown, will gladly pay me every attention."

He interrupted me quickly, saying :

"Then you know his Lordship?"

"Intimately," I replied.

He looked thoughtful ; then, as if speaking to himself, muttered :

"I had no idea his Lordship had travelled so far."

I made no reply ; when, glancing his eyes over my dress, he said :

"It is just as I thought. His Lordship knows nothing of dress, but considers all these requisite elegancies as minor considerations :—a great mistake ; but the wisest men sometimes err. Appearances are always imposing : what imposes on the senses, influences the mind ; every thing proves this to a demonstration. No arguing against admitted facts ; true, the innovations of

The French Revolution have caused some dilapidation to the ancient fabric of our habits, and customs; shorn fashion of some of her beams; but the foundation is unsapped: the goose may be plucked of its feathers, but they grow again."

The laughter I had so long restrained, now burst forth; and, I fear, somewhat rudely, for Mr. Moneymore looked very angry, as he petulantly said:

"Mr. Deerhurst, Sir Roger having deigned to place you under my peculiar care, in pity to your youth, and depending on your honour not to repeat any information that I may give you, more particularly to Lord Plinlimmon, who considers a too great attention to trifles contemptible, I shall relate a few facts to prove the influence—it may be the caprice of fashion; first assuring you, that I am not one of the Cosmopolite Club, though his Lordship has graciously said, that except for the prejudices of his set, who banish all who are useful from the high temple of their goddess, I might aspire to the honour."

He paused, and looked at me with his smirk of self-conceit.

I coolly answered: "Mr. Moneymore, being totally ignorant of your subject and allusions, I am incompetent to answer. The name of Plinlimmon as connected with all that is great and good, has long been familiar to my mind;

with that of Beletrieve, I am totally unacquainted, and never before heard of the Cosmopolite Club."

"Tell it not in London!" he exclaimed, in a theatrical tone, "it would at once mark you as a person unacquainted with high life, as one who had either lived in seclusion—a seclusion which excluded all the fashionable news of the day, or, worse again, as having mixed with a very low set; and, in either case, you would never be admitted into the Beletrieve Club."

Again I laughed, for the grimaces and emphasis of the man were quite apish; recovering myself, I replied:

"Then, Mr. Moneymore, you must class me with the secluded. I have no acquaintances in London; how could I?"

"True," he answered, "you are a stranger, even to our customs, and habits, and style of dress," and he scanned the old military surcoat, and the Hessian boots, with a look of ineffable contempt. I made no reply, and he continued: "Mr. Deerhurst, the facts I am going to confide to your honour, and which you may consider as a preface to the volume of instructions I shall consider it my duty to give, before your introduction to Lord Beletrieve:—'that mould of form, and that glass of fashion,'—are such as to the uninitiated must appear absurd, still they go to prove that fashion

depends upon no tangible cause. It is not youth, for Lord Beletrieve is sixty ; it is not beauty, for his Lordship, once so pre-eminent, is on the wane ; nay, one might possess the form of an Apollo, and the head of an Antinous, and not be the fashion. Again, it is not wealth, for his Lordship's fortune is now limited ; in short, it is a *je ne sais quoi* which defies accurate description."

"Forgive me," said I, "for interrupting you ; but I thought you were going to relate some important facts which would prove the influence of Lord Beletrieve."

"Important !" he replied, emphatically, "the word appears misapplied ; important !—it seems merely applicable to business : it is important to a man to look after his property, after his family, after his health ; but what have these to say to fashion ? Well, Mr. Deerhurst, perhaps you are right ; for, after all, whatever holds an influence over society, is of importance ; and a power may be rendered still more potent by being invisible, its mystification possesses one advantage—it cannot be analysed by the vulgar."

Sick of his rhodomontading on his favourite subject, I replied rather impatiently :

"Mr. Moneymore, you admit that business is of importance, may I then speak of that which has brought me hither ?"

“Nay, Mr. Deerhurst, I have to apologize for having so long delayed showing you Sir Roger’s letter of instructions to me, relative to your future conduct. Unfortunately, as he expresses it, from the conduct of his eldest son, Lionel, all his hopes now centre in you; however, before I go for the letter, you must take some refreshment; until it is announced, with your permission, I shall continue my explanation of Lord Beletrieve.”

I bowed my assent; indeed, I was too much agitated to speak. Could it be possible that Etienne Deerhurst was dead? And that from grief, penitence, or want of some other heir, Sir Roger was going to acknowledge me? And was I to be raised from all the *désagréments* of poverty, to such a proud position? Observing my silence, Mr. Moneymore imputed it to an interest in his conversation; looking full in my face, he exclaimed:

“Mr. Deerhurst, I must request your fixed attention, while you observe my wig, for it is a wig of no vulgar fashion.”

The abruptness and strangeness of this remark, at a moment when all my thoughts were absorbed in calculating the vast possessions of my heirship, appeared so absurd, that I gave way to unrestrained laughter. Like my poor father, my risible muscles were easily put into motion;

surely, I thought, the man is mad, and I am more likely to lose my thousand pounds, than to inherit old Sir Roger's lacs of rupees.

"I am by no means offended, Mr. Deerhurst," said Mr. Moneymore. "I know from Sir Roger that you are of a gay, volatile temper, fond of pleasure, and easily amused; however, my wig has its history,—hear it. In early youth, Lord Beletrieve was remarkable for his fine hair—a distinction of which he was very proud; and, as far as a very superficial knowledge of history admitted, traced it as a sign of high birth. At this period, he spent much time in Paris, and, according to the fashions of the *élite*, tied his hair partly behind, letting some luxuriant curls fall at either side over his ears. Well time, alas! Mr. Deerhurst, no respecter of persons, rolled on its footsteps, marked by the horrors of the French revolution; but worse far worse, it thinned the flowing locks of Lord Beletrieve. Powder and pomatum, in vain, struggled to hide the coming baldness; true, the effect of this memorable event had cleared a way for the defect to escape detection. But now, Mr. Deerhurst, for one of my secrets; nature who in other respects had formed Lord Beletrieve as a very model, had given him a pair of prodigious ears, quite flat at top and of a deep crimson hue which nothing

could remove, and they looked ill, alarmingly ill, near a complexion swallowed by the aforesaid time. Now what was to be done? Cropped heads were the style! As Lord Beletrieve pertinently observed, every innovation of the aristocracy was marked by the setting aside of some gentlemanly distinction, such as neglecting the studied forms of politeness, a gallant attention to the fair sex, a profound veneration to superior birth, rank, or position. More barbarous still was the clipping off the hair and drapery, for the unwashed rabble, finding them an inconvenience, and that they sat ungracefully on their unpractised limbs, violently condemned as effeminate an elegance they could not attain. *Bêtes!*" exclaimed Mr. Moneymore, taking a long pinch of snuff, and handing me the box; "it is Prince's mixture, Mr. Deerhurst," he added conceitedly.

I replied with vivacity, "You are very kind, Mr. Moneymore, but I never take snuff."

With profound gravity he answered: "You must learn to do so, Mr. Deerhurst, for Lord Beletrieve takes it."

"And pray, what is that to me;" I coldly demanded.

"All—every thing," was the answer, and then with a profound bow, he continued: "Mr. Deer-

hurst, in this dilemma, between loss of hair, and rather donkeyish ears, another man would have been for ever lost to fashion ; but the mighty genius of Beletrieve rose above his ears, and he invented and made a model for a wig ; went to France, remained *perdu* for a year, then returned to London. On the same night there was a fête at Holland or Lansdowne House, no matter which, a great political question was being discussed. The Prince and his Royal Brothers were there. Lord Beletrieve was announced ; he entered with all the grace of his courtly manner ; every eye was turned on his wig, which was elevated by his Lordship's unusual height above the crowd. The sensation it excited was quite electric, politics were forgotten, and wigs alone absorbed all the thoughts of this great assembly. The result need scarcely be told : that ornament so esteemed by our grandfathers, and whose magic perfumed circle enveloped so much of wisdom, of folly, of hope and fears, again resumed its influence in society ? The next day several of the young nobility went off to Paris, hoping to equal his Lordship's wig, or as it was termed, the Beletrieve ; while others were satisfied to have their heads shaven and ornamented with the best perruques London could produce. Mr. Deerhurst, though not noble I adopted the

fashion," and he bowed his head till the powder was scattered over my face. This put me out of humour, and I said sulkily, "Mr. Moneymore, I am no judge of perruques or wigs."

"Forgive me, Mr. Deerhurst, but the word wig or perruque is associated with a thousand ideas irrelevant to our subject. The practical wisdom and knowledge of a Lord Chancellor, the solemnity of a judge, the puffed rubicund cheeks of a coachman, the shrivelled drivelling face of an old beggar, all pop out in review before us, for imagination is a busy body. Not so with a Beletrieve; we see nothing but flowing ringlets, wafting the richest perfume over some fair one's gentle bosom, as love pours soft nonsense into her willing ear, while her admiring eyes rapturously rest on the Beletrieve."

"And is this," said I, pointing to Mr. Moneymore's wig, "a Beletrieve?"

"Yes, I assure you, one of the genuine Parisian cut, and thereby hangs a tale. You laugh, Mr. Deerhurst, at the expression, perhaps you think that I allude to the queue of my Beletrieve, by no means, it is a mere *façon de parler*. Now as his Lordship says, all *façons de parler*, and old saws and sayings are bad taste, and smell of antiquity, a subject which should never be alluded to in fashionable society,—seeing that one of

its great objects is to banish from the mind all painful recollections of the past, all thoughts of future;—in present enjoyment if we cannot stop the progress of time—”

Interrupting him, I exclaimed: “Crown it with a Beletrieve, and so hide its baldness.”

“A very just remark, Mr. Deerhurst; for seeing is believing, and what we do not see we are apt to forget.” Saying these words, Mr. Moneymore heaved a solemn sigh, observing, “Mr. Deerhurst, we learn these quaint sayings in our nursery, amidst that grade of society called nursery-maids, and in after-days they force themselves on our memory, and the vulgar truisms burst forth; but as his Lordship observes, true politeness is, of all accomplishments, the most difficult of attainment; it requires a constant sacrifice of our opinions to others, a practical good temper, and more difficult still, an apparent admiration of qualities we sincerely despise, and often a civility and attention to persons, whom, were we to follow the impulse of our inclination, we would literally kick out of our presence.”

Again, I indulged in laughter, for my own sensations illustrated the truth of the remark, as for the last half hour I had been devoutly wishing to prove my activity, by a gentle kicking of

the pompous fop. Far from being offended, Mr. Moneymore, who delighted in having a listener, seemed pleased, and with his apish grin continued :

“All this time, I have wandered from my Beletrieve, and the tail that hangs thereto. Know, Mr. Deerhurst, the mystery of its perfection, but remember it is a sacred trust; this, my Beletrieve, was originally intended for his Lordship; fortunately for my head, it will not suit his, for the springs pressed too tightly on his temples, which resisting the progress of the aforesaid time, retained their fulness; be that as it may, he ordered the Beletrieve to be returned to Paris, and his perruque-maker to be dismissed. Happily for me, I knew his valet, he acquainted me with the interesting fact. Not to dwell too much on particulars, by paying a large gratuity, the locks formed to grace the head of nobility, became mine, and as you may see they fit gracefully. It was a fortunate chance, Mr. Deerhurst, which thus garnished my temples.”

“I have to thank you Mr. Moneymore,” I replied, “for information so interesting, and shall in future know how to judge of wigs, and of the heads which support them. Shall we now to business, and for the present waive fashion, with whose mysteries I am totally unacquainted?”

“Mr. Deerhurst, to a young man in your position, fashion is business, and as I shall make it mine to bring about an immediate introduction between you and his Lordship, I will just give you a few more hints, as to what I shall term the style of appearance necessary for you to adopt. Of course your tailor—I must recommend you to mine—can do a vast deal ; but then, there is attitude, and yours is too erect, too stately for the present mode, and might prejudice his Lordship against you. But as knowledge is ever more influential when we can trace it to its source, I shall now explain the origin of the curve in my back which I flatter myself has not escaped your notice.”

“It is no flattery, Mr. Moneymore, for me to say it commanded my attention. Was I wrong in imputing it to weakness of the spine ?”

“All your ideas, Mr. Deerhurst, are what I call unsophisticated ; but a few weeks’ intercourse with Lord Beletrieve and his set will reform you. The origin of the curve is this : his Lordship’s epicurean habits led to delicacy of health ; for it is a melancholy fact that, as yet, neither civilization nor science has succeeded in discovering a panacea for the evils inherent to our nature, such as disease, old age, death and pain, which by a most unhappy arrangement the noble seems to

suffer more than the peasant. Well, it so chanced, that some years ago—let me see, it is now seven—his lordship was attacked by rheumatic gout, of a very severe description, in his left leg and in his back. To the bodily torture thus inflicted on him, was the more insupportable mortification of having his debility discovered.”

“My dear sir,” said I, interrupting him somewhat petulantly, “I can readily understand that your Lord Beletrieve is a very fine gentleman, and that many pleasant passages may be told of his varied and fashionable existence; but I really did not call upon you to be amused by a recital of his adventures.”

“Softly, my young friend,” said Mr. Moneymore, sagely, “as I think it by no means improbable that you and I are to be brought more intimately together,—as you are a very young man, and moreover the grandson of my patron,—my friend, I may venture to call him—Sir Roger Deerhurst, I think I am doing you a service for which you will hereafter be grateful,—by communicating to you (in strict confidence be it remembered) some ‘passages’ as you call them in Lord Beletrieve’s career as at once illustrate the character of that distinguished man, and furnish materials for imitation to younger but congenial spirits. A celebrated author, my dear young gentleman, whom to read is to admire, admits

that vice loses half its horrors by losing all its grossness. Again, Mr. Deerhurst, as that profound philosopher, Gibbon, has written, half the world are guided by names, which, I opine, means that men are taken by their words. Hence I infer, that when I hold up to your observation and inspection, a character so illustrious as my friend, Lord Beletrieve—a man in whom all the graces unite,—who knows, perhaps better than any man breathing, how to soften—to mellow down the natural asperities of the passions—’

“May I inquire, Mr. Moneymore, as to the morals of a society that requires these refinements?”

“Truly, Mr. Deerhurst, you require improvement. The fact is, Sir Roger, who is an old man, has tainted your mind with obsolete notions of virtue, and all that. Wealth, not love, was his pursuit; and where we pursue one object with avidity, we often remain ignorant of others, and thus form erroneous views. But Lord Beletrieve by no means supports the present state of morals; on the contrary, he considers them so relaxed, that no wise man, he tells me, will venture to marry. However, his Lordship, who despises all prejudices, admits that the price of a virtuous woman is above rubies; and could such be found, men should marry. But, alas! such

precious gems are rare, consequently to most persons unattainable."

"A strange observation for his Lordship," I replied. "At least, it is very unlike what, from your former account of him, I was led to expect."

He answered, "To the man of the world, nothing is strange. Among the Beletrieve set are many men of extensive information and of high talent; but they have chosen present enjoyment for their pursuit, and fashion as their presiding goddess. But no more of this. Before you are one of the initiated, you have much to learn. To begin, I must return to the graceful bend of the back. When Lord Beletrieve was attacked with gout, he consulted his physician, confiding to him that death would be preferable to an exposure of his misfortune. The physician, a wise, intelligent man, at once entered into his feelings, which he considered not only perfectly natural, but laudable; advised him, on the instant, to write letters to all his most familiar and intimate friends, regretting that unexpected business obliged him to set off for Italy without so much as saying one farewell. This done, the next business was to remove his Lordship, by night, to a solitary house near Hampton Court, where for six months he attended him with such care and skill,

that at the end of that period, his Lordship set off privately for Italy. In nine months afterwards, he returned to London, (it was the very height of the season), bringing over some rare articles of *virtu*, which he presented to the Prince of Wales, with an assurance that he had gone to Athens expressly to collect them for his Royal Highness. The Prince received them most graciously, and on the following day invited a large party to meet Lord Beletrieve, and to see his presents. The assembly met, and many were surprised at the alteration a few months had made in his Lordship's appearance. He looked pallid, exhausted ; had a slight lameness in his left foot, and his back was stooped. Aware of these personal defects, and resolved to hide their origin, he planned a method to turn them to advantage. To this end, when the dessert was placed on the table, he managed to command the Prince's particular attention ; as a matter of course, that of all the party followed ; then in a calm, bland voice, he related a few amusing anecdotes, and afterwards, with apparent carelessness, spoke of some English nobles whom he had met at Florence, but who—though fine and accomplished young men—had, in consequence of their appearance of robust health, been excluded by the exclusives. 'Indeed,' he continued, turning towards

the Prince, ‘your Royal Highness will, I have no doubt, agree with me in thinking that the English exclusives in Italy are too refined, when I acquaint you with the following circumstances. May I first take the liberty of reminding your Royal Highness that more than once you have complimented me on my dancing? Having elicited your royal admiration, it naturally became my proudest boast; and being solicitous to excite a favourable sensation in Florence, I took every opportunity of displaying my figure, more especially in the waltz. But, judge my astonishment—nay, I may truly say, despair—when I saw that I began to be neglected by the exclusives. Happily I possessed a sincere friend among them, who acquainted me that dancing, or in fact, any movement that showed a perfect strength and elasticity of limbs had for the last three weeks been by the exclusives dubbed as vulgar; and that although they might admit within the pale of their select society certain persons whose moral characters would not bear a microscopic examination—’

“My dear Sir,” said I, almost maddened by my companion’s prolixity, “I must say—”

“Say nothing at present, but listen,” he returned; “though they might admit, as I have just observed, certain clouded characters, still,

that was *tout-à-fait autre chose* from associating with anything vulgar. The very word vulgar was the antipodes of fashion, and caused a revulsion of feeling within its select circles. Besides, vulgarity was an existing evil, and required to be guarded against; whereas, morals had become obsolete, and any attempt to revive them by fastidious objections or invidious remarks on the conduct of persons in a certain class, would be quite a Quixotic business—a fighting in the dark against an invisible power—rendering the exalted feeling which strove to bring back the romance and virtue of a former age a subject of ridicule and contempt, and thus injuring in place of serving the cause. Now, your Royal Highness, as this reasoning of my familiar spirit was too profound to be disputed, I satisfied myself by demanding how dancing, so long sanctioned by fashion, and which at once combined music, grace, exercise, and excitement, had become so obnoxious as to incur the awful charge of vulgarity? She replied, ‘Why the fact is this, a short time ago the Marchese Zoppo came hither from Rome, and excited a great sensation; indeed, scandal went so far as to say that a certain Princess, whom he had met in Berlin, was his familiar spirit; however, on the truth of this I cannot decide, but one thing is certain, although the Marchese was of

patrician birth and in possession of a princely fortune, his proudest boast was a slight lameness of his left ankle, and a gentle, almost imperceptible curve of his back, which he called a Grecian bend? Now, Beletrieve,' continued my fair familiar, 'although I am certain that these high attributes of fashion will to many appear a blemish, and that in due time dancing will resume its influence, still for the present I would strongly advise you to study the Zoppo graces; you have a great advantage in your exalted height, which even exceeds the Marchese's. It may be, your Royal Highness, a weakness to admit—for I consider that all weakness consists in the admission—that I became so emulous to attain these perfections, that at an exorbitant price I engaged a French dancing-master to instruct me in the Zoppo art.' Observing that the Prince laughed at the idea, without changing his grave manner he said, 'I can solemnly assure your Royal Highness, that more than one young man of fashion had the tendon Achilles of his left leg slightly cut to obtain the desired accomplishment. So far, success might be commanded by all who possessed heroism in the cause; but the Grecian bend was more difficult of attainment, indeed, to some impossible. It required height, and rather a slight form. In vain the short and

stout-made studied the Zoppo stoop ; they might indeed mock the grace, by slouching their shoulders or stooping their backs forward, and thus rendering themselves ridiculous by aiming at an advantage they were not formed to possess.' But, Mr. Deerhurst, passing over all the remarks the Prince was pleased to make, and his compliments to Lord Beletrieve, I shall on this subject merely add, that a few days after the Prince's dinner to Lord Beletrieve, there was not a fashionable to be seen in Hyde Park who did not attempt to sport the Zoppo graces ; and Monsieur Moussard, who opened an academy for their instruction realized, before the end of three months, a large fortune. As to his Lordship, next to the Prince he became the most admired man in London, 'the observed of all observers.' Thus his genius rose above his broken health, and what would have sent another to pine away life in a *fauteuil*, enveloped in flannels and surrounded by nurses, raised him to the very pinnacle of the *haut ton*. But you look exhausted, Mr. Deerhurst ; permit me to ring for the refreshments."

So saying, he rose on his long legs, and skipped over to the bell with something of the movement of a kangaroo. I saw this was a *ruse* to show off the Zoppo graces ; and though I laughed at seeing foppery so caricatured, still I disliked him so

sincerely, I was resolved not to humour his folly by a single compliment.

Refreshments being announced, we descended to the dining-room, which in keeping with every thing else in that region of vanity, was elaborately spread out with plate and glass, sumptuous enough to entertain the Prince. The repast was exquisite, and my stomach, long inured to the scant and ill-dressed fare of Oxford Street, in spite of conscience, which assured me that these preparations were not made for my poverty, partook largely of the viands; in this I was joined by Mr. Moneymore, so I concluded that a good appetite did not come under the class of the Beletrieve's vulgarities. There was consolation in this, at least while I had a thousand pounds to feast on.

Ever and anon, while partaking of his costly fare, I could observe my host scanning uneasily my antiquated garments, and evidently perplexed by the result of his observations. At length, as though a new light had broken upon him, he cried out in an agitated tone:—

“Positively, Mr. Deerhurst, I am at a loss to understand—ha! now I have it; you only escaped from shipwreck. Good heaven! how you frighten me. Speak quickly, dear Sir, and relieve my mind from the apprehension of your luggage being lost. It must have been of considerable

value, for Sir Roger, in his letter announcing your intention of coming to England, expressly stated that during your stay in London, it was his desire that you should be surrounded by a princely retinue. Excuse me, Mr. Deerhurst, but on the instant of our introduction, you should have acquainted me with this very great misfortune. What is now to be done? I have no orders from Sir Roger relative to supplying you."

With a very grave countenance I answered: "I assure you, Mr. Moneymore, I was quite ignorant of having been shipwrecked; on the contrary, whenever I chanced to be at sea, my voyages have been prosperous. As to an order from Sir Roger, I have one in my pocket, the ostensible cause why I have now the honour of your acquaintance."

So saying, with a low bow, and I fear rather a sneering expression of countenance, I handed him the draft. The whole truth burst on his astonished soul. He actually trembled with rage and vexation. In a voice stifled with passion, he exclaimed:—

"And who are you who dared to come here and impose upon me to such a degree, that I not only sent an apology at an awkward hour to Lord Beletrieve, but confided to you his secrets? Good heaven! what infatuation," and he actually

stamped on the ground, striking his forehead with violence ; then glaring on me, he exclaimed, " Sir, you are an impostor !"

" By no means, Mr. Moneymore ; all the mistake was of your own making. Now be pleased to say who you supposed me to be."

" You announced yourself as Mr. Deerhurst. Your card is on my dressing-table."

" And so I am," I replied, laughing ; for I enjoyed the fop's misery.

He seemed startled, and then in a subdued tone said :

" Are you Mr. Etienne Eustace Deerhurst ? If so, excuse me ; but really I am bewildered."

" No," I replied haughtily. " But I am Freville Deerhurst, Sir Roger's rightful heir."

He made his kangaroo step, calling out :

" Now the mystery is explained—you are the beggared son," and he glanced his eyes contemptuously on my dress, " of that Lionel Deerhurst whom Sir Roger disinherited, and you came here to play off some vulgar hoax. Quit my house, Sir. I will not honour your draft ; and if you delay another instant, I shall order my servant to show you out."

Before he concluded the last sentence, I shook my cane over his head, exclaiming :

" Fop as you are, dare not again to speak dis-

respectfully of my father, or to address me except as a gentleman."

"I am no coward, Mr. Deerhurst," he replied, with something like dignity; "still, I have no wish to enter into a quarrel with you."

And he was moving from the room, when I called out:

"Have you no money of Sir Roger Deerhurst's in your hands, that you decline honouring this draft?"

"Thousands, tens of thousands!" he answered petulantly. But," and he hesitated, "I must request an explanation how this draft came into your possession."

I replied carelessly, for I was tired of the whole scene, "It was forwarded for my use by Sir Roger to Lord Plinlimmon. But if you, Mr. Moneymore, hesitate about its acceptance, I have only to write to his Lordship, which I shall do this evening," and I advanced with a proud step towards the door.

"Stay a moment, Mr. Deerhurst," he called out. "Matters of business must be attended to, not hurried over." He then scanned the draft with great attention, muttering, "There can be no mistake; Sir Roger himself drew this out." Then turning to me, he added, "Mr. Deerhurst, you say that you have received this direct from Lord Plinlimmon?"

As he examined the note, I marked with surprise the change in his manner. All the foppery of fashion was laid aside, and he wore the anxious, important look of a man engaged in money matters. On his questioning me, I answered:

"Let there be no further mistake, the draft was forwarded to me through Lord Plinlimmon, who, from friendship to my uncle, Mr. Arnheim, wrote to Sir Roger in my favour."

"And who is the Reverend Mr. Arnheim?" he demanded, in his insolent manner.

I answered with indignation, "Mr. Arnheim is a clergyman of superior talents and strict morality."

"Pshaw!" he answered. "How Lord Beltrieve would laugh at all this cant. Superior talents!—strict morality!—absurd. However, Mr. Deerhurst, this draft appears correct; still, I should like to see some vouchers to prove your identity. Collect them, and then on next Tuesday, at twelve, call at my office in Mark Lane, and your business shall be settled." So saying, he rang the bell, calling out, "Open the door for this gentleman." Before I was half-way down the stairs, I heard him scream out, "If that shabby fellow ever calls again, of course I am not at home."

I felt all the insolence of the *parvenu*, but

despised him too much to resent it. On reaching the hall door, a new vexation occurred; it was raining violently, and a footman, whom I had not before observed, respectfully requested that I would step into the dining-hall till the shower passed off. As he spoke, I recognized in him a person of the name of Pat Mulcahy; he had lived with the Tennants in Cork. With ready Irish wit, the fellow entered into a ludicrous account of Mr. Moneymore's miserly habits, grafted on pompous display. He also said, that on the following week he purposed quitting his service, being engaged to Lord Beletrieve, whom Pat designated as the noblest nobleman in all England. To my inquiry how he had discovered me, he replied, that the servants being amused at the vaunted heir of Sir Roger Deerhurst arriving in such shabby trim—I give Pat's words—he peeped into the saloon to see him, and in a moment twigged me; but shrewdly concluding that I came to impose on Mr. Moneymore, resolved not to betray my secret.

I smiled at his Irish honesty, but still thanked him. A few moments after, we saw Mr. Moneymore drive off. Pat then called a coach, and I returned to Oxford Street.

CHAPTER V.

I REPAIRED next day to Mr. Moneymore's office in the City, and found, to my astonishment, that he peremptorily refused to cash the draft, on the plea of having received no direct communication from Sir Roger. Had I not been totally inexperienced in business I might have seen through this flimsy evasion, and have suspected what I afterwards ascertained to be the fact, that this aper of fashion, malignant at the mistake of which I was the innocent occasion, resolved to avenge himself by retarding the payment, which my appearance convinced him was so necessary to my comfort. This blow came upon me quite unexpectedly, and I turned from the office in a truly miserable state of mind.

Without a friend in the great city, I might almost say in the kingdom, and burning with offended pride, I was driven almost to despair. My troubled spirit at length found consolation by recurring to Clara and the Parsonage; and conquering the reluctance which I felt at addressing

myself to Mr. Arnheim, as a suppliant for his assistance and advice, I sat down and briefly communicated to him the disappointment of my hopes, and the desolate position in which I found myself.

Having concluded my letter, in spite of the threatening aspect of the weather, I set off at a brisk pace to the Post Office. On my return, I was overtaken by a shower, and in making a sudden rush to get into shelter, I nearly upset a gentleman who was waiting for his carriage. Of course I turned round to apologize, when after looking steadily at me, he exclaimed with vivacity :

“Grown up as you are, I think I cannot be mistaken in my young friend, Freville Deerhurst?”

While he addressed me, I recognized in him Mr. Tennant altered, indeed, from the comely, quiet, industrious man of business, to the well-dressed, positively handsome man of fashion. I returned his salute with a glow of pleasure.

“Let me take a full view of you, Freville,” he added, smiling, and stepping some paces back, so as to command my person. “Why you are upwards of six feet high, and such limbs and shoulders; and it is not quite three years since I treated and ordered you about as a school-boy. I must be angry with you and Aigline for making an old man of me.”

I interrupted him with vivacity, exclaiming: "And how are dear Aigline and George? And where are they now?"

"George," he replied, "is on the wide and distant seas, but I know not his present destination, and Aigline is in London; but, Freville, for the present waive inquiries, I would not mar the happiness of meeting you, and since we last met, I have experienced irremediable sorrow, and acquired what, I fear, will prove but transitory enjoyment. But life is a chequered scene. However," he rejoined with a forced laugh, "a truce to melancholy. I see no chance of this shower clearing off, so if not otherwise engaged, perhaps you will accompany me, and as we drive along you can tell all your adventures. Where is your father, Major Deerhurst, at present? And do you still remember Clara Arnheim, your pretty cousin, about whom George and Aigline so constantly teased you?"

I replied, with emotion, "It is long since I have heard either from, or of my father; but he is in some of the Western Isles; and as to Clara, she is dearer to me than ever: and now, Mr. Tenant, I request of you to acquaint me with every circumstance connected with your own family. I have never forgotten the happy days spent at Glanmire Water, nor my gratitude for all your kindness."

He answered, playfully: "Come, come, no compliments between old friends; and now, in answer to your questions, soon after you left Cork, George—and he, you know, was destined for the navy—having obtained his appointment, we all went to Portsmouth to ship off the young midddy. An unexpected surprise awaited me there, I found myself the master of a large fortune by the death of an old gentleman whom I had obliged in life, and who, being without any nearer connexions, testified his gratitude by making me his heir. It is a long story, and I will not punish you with the recital."

Grasping his hand, I was warmly congratulating him on his good fortune and happiness, when, contracting his brow, with a quivering lip, he replied:

"My young friend, talk not to me of happiness. I have lost her whom no wealth can replace—my wife is dead! But a truce to these gloomy reminiscences. You will be glad to hear that your old friend, Aigline, is looked upon as the handsomest and most accomplished of the votaries of fashion. But it waxes late, we must now part; and remember, I shall expect you tomorrow in Grosvenor Square, which must be your head-quarters during your stay in London.

CHAPTER VI.

WITH a light step, and a heart considerably relieved, I hurried next day to Grosvenor Square, and, as I passed through the lofty hall and spacious staircase, I was struck with the contrast between the elegance of their decorations, and the elaborate splendour of the Moneymore residence. I was buried in a philosophical reverie on the vicissitudes of life, when the door of the room, into which I had been ushered, flew open, and Aigline—the beautiful Aigline—sprang forward to greet and to welcome me. Not quite three years had elapsed since we last parted in Cork, she was then about sixteen, and so handsome, that I could find no words sufficient to express my admiration; and since then my memory had often reverted to her as she sat dressing dolls, to man a tiny yacht which, under Mr. Tennant's instructions, I had built for Clara, or, with comprehen-

sive genius, hurried over her different lessons, so as to be in time to row down the water with her brother, Charles Mellish, La Franck, and myself, when as she gaily guided the helm, she would warble forth the songs of her native land, while I, leaving the more arduous task of rowing to my companions, accompanied her with my flute, in spite of the angry looks of Mellish, whose boyish love for her already subjected him to the pangs of jealousy. All this I had remembered, and the various scenes connected with the bright days spent at Glanmire Villa; and her father had said, that the admiration she awakened was a passport to the first society; yet I had formed no conception of the loveliness that now stood before me; no, not in the hour when my vivid imagination was most exalted had I fancied a face and form of such exquisite proportions. To describe her, I might say that she combined the fine chiselled features of a Grecian Venus, with the blushing softness of a Hebe; that her hair was dark and glossy as the raven's wing, her eyes of the deepest blue, her lips and teeth full of freshness; but all description must fall short of the varying and intellectual expression of her countenance, in which consisted her greatest charm. Lord Beletrieve, of whom I shall hereafter speak, was heard to say, that she was an

illustration of the poet's animated description of the beautiful Lady of Coventry :

Whene'er with soft serenity she smil'd,
Or caught the orient blush of quick surprise,
How sweetly mutable, how brightly wild,
The liquid lustre darted from her eyes.

Each look, each motion, spoke an inborn grace,
Which o'er her form its transient glory cast ;
Some lovelier wonder soon usurped its place,
Chased by a charm still lovelier than the past.

In form, Aigline was rather below the middle size ; but though very slight, her limbs were so perfectly rounded, that Canova might have taken her as a model for one of his graces. So imposing was her appearance, so dazzling her beauty, that as she stood smiling and blushing, I continued gazing, so absorbed in wonder, that I never thought of returning her salute.

After waiting a few moments in expectation of my addressing her, in a playful, but half reproachful tone, she said :

“ Freville, hither I flew to receive you as a companion and friend, and you scarcely deign to acknowledge me ! Are we then to meet as strangers ? If so, Mr. Deerhurst, excuse the freedom of my address—the result of ‘ auld lang syne,’ and permit me to request the honour of

your accompanying me to the breakfast parlour, where Mr. Tennant waits to receive you."

I caught her hand, and pressing it rapturously to my lips, exclaimed: "Aigline, you must excuse an awkwardness, which sprung from my admiration of yourself. Positively, nature never produced anything so beautiful! Is there not a fable, where every one who gazed on a certain princess was turned into a statue? Such is the effect your charms have on me."

She burst into a laugh, as she answered: "What a strange compliment to prove me to be of such a petrifying nature. If all my admirers are turned into statues, to what a stupid destiny I am consigned! Why, though I were as vain as Lord Beletrieve, it would be no compensation; but, Freville, your metaphors were always a little incongruous; however, I am glad to find that you are not changed. But all this time papa is waiting. Yet, one word before we join him: am I more beautiful than Clara Arnheim?" as she spoke, she playfully pressed her finger to her lip, and shook her head.

"By all the laws of gallantry," I exclaimed, adopting her gay mood, "I should give the preference to present company. But, in plain sincerity, methinks that Paris himself would have found it difficult to decide between your

Houri style of beauty, and Clara's Madonna face and form."

Again she laughed; and oh! that sorrow should ever have hushed that happy laugh, as she sportively answered:

"Why, Freville, you must have learned to blunder in Ireland! Was there ever so grotesque a compliment to place my rival among the highest of the Christian saints, and make poor me a soulless being—a mere plaything, to amuse some three-tailed bashaw of a Turk! Really, I am quite offended," and, drawing herself up with a stately air, she walked out of the room.

I followed, and as I entered the breakfast parlour, Mr. Tennant rose, and received me with as much courtesy, as if I had been the obliger, he the obliged.

Aigline, whose gay spirits were never restrained by her father's presence, immediately set about quizzing me for my awkward compliments. Soon after Mr. Tennant retired. Being left alone with Aigline, she first obtained my promise to continue in Grosvenor Square, adding,

"And now for my plans, Freville, I must use all my interest with Lord Beletrieve to introduce you into the world of fashion. If I succeed, what with your personal advantages—for you are not very ill-looking—your musical talents, which

I hope you have not neglected, and his patronage, I foresee you will be one of the dandies of the season: for observe, macaronies are out of date—the very name sunk into oblivion.”

“It is a brilliant prospect,” I answered playfully; “at all events, introduce me to this Lord Beletrieve, for he seems a kind of Marquis of Carrabbas, forced on my notice by every person to whom I speak.”

“And you,” said she, smiling archly, and pointing to a confoundedly ill-shaped pair of square-toed boots, a little the worse for the wear, and which I had put on in consequence of my Hessians being under the care of a cobbler, “are to perform the part of the cat, and seek out some Princess for him.”

Although provoked at her sarcasm, I laughed, and, to change the subject—for I never could endure ridicule—said, “Aigline, describe Lord Beletrieve; I want to discover whether your portrait will agree with Mr. Moneymore’s caricature.”

“Describe Lord Beletrieve? What an impossible task! However, I can give you what a painter would term a rough outline of his person: as to his mental qualifications, facts alone can do them justice, and for those you must abide patiently; I would not anticipate your study of

his character,—mark me it is a black-letter book. To commence: his Lordship's age is about sixty—thanks to the Peerage, no mistake there; his height six feet two; proportions just; in youth he would not have disgraced a Hercules; his whole form set off to the best advantage by his tailor, and his face delicately shaded by the luxuriant flow of his peruke, the—”

“Oh, stop its description!” I exclaimed, “for there you cannot excel Mr. Moneymore's.”

“Then I come to his eyes, which, though dim in sight, are bright to view; his lips are pallid, but smile blandly; his countenance is irresistible, from its Cupid—no not Cupid, the ugly, chubbed, fat boy, but from its own expression—to women, so full of languishing tenderness; to men, of calm dignity, tinctured with *hauteur*. Then he is a senator, a privy-councillor; a first rate favourite with the Prince: and, next to his Royal Highness, the leader of London fashion:—prouder distinction still, he is chief of the Cosmopolite Club—an association whose proudest boast is, that rising above all the prejudices of patriotism, domestic affections, or divine hopes, they live solely for themselves, and not for their body corporate, for that would be diverging from the concentration of the individual selfishness which forms at once their bane and antidote.

Then, though no wit himself, his Lordship is a great admirer of other men's genius, that is, if it pays him homage; add to this, he is a favourite with several ladies of quality, and whenever he condescends to pay attention, he boasts of being irresistible, for, observe, to yield to any violent feeling would be against the fundamental spirit of cosmopolitism. Among his minor attractions—minor as being more attainable—may be placed a villa on the Thames, of which Lucullus might have been proud; a splendid London residence, embellished with the rarest articles of *vertu*, innumerable Venuses, Apollos, Cupids; in short, taste as well as luxury preside over its adornment, and all is in keeping with its splendour."

She paused, and I observed, "Aigline, add that he is a most inspiring subject who could draw forth from you such a tirade. Now tell me, how did Miss Tennant get acquainted with him, and what does she do with this very great man?"

"That question, Freville," she replied, "obliges me to appear very vain. One evening I went to Covent Garden to see the inimitable Siddons in the character of Mrs. Haller, and being then uninitiated in fashionable life, was in a perfect ecstasy at her performance. It chanced that the

Prince entered a box near to the one in which I sat, to converse with some ladies of his acquaintance. He had the good taste to look at me, and be dazzled by my charms. Seriously, Freville, he honoured me by his notice, and pronounced me beautiful."

"Don't blush so unmercifully, Aigline," I said, smiling. "I am not going to be so disloyal as to dispute his Royal Highness's opinion."

"Well, Freville, as Lord Beletrieve's opinion was necessary to establish his Royal Highness's, he sent for him to another box ; and, fortunately for me, after a strict examination, his Lordship approved, and thus I was at once brought into notice, nay, more, the next day Lord Beletrieve called upon my father, and as he afterwards rather too candidly told me, congratulated himself on finding that, though a *nouveau riche*, he was quite presentable. In his Lordship's cool analyzation of our merits, discovering my musical talents, he recommended that I should immediately obtain finishing lessons on the harp, in singing, and, start, not, Freville, in waltzing. And as the *artistes* who were to honour me by attending at a price so monstrous that I should blush to name it, might object to instruct a *nobody*, moreover, an *Irish* nobody, he interested himself to obtain that advantage for me, and, of course, succeeded.

‘Miss Tennant,’ solemnly observed his Lordship, ‘be indefatigable in improving yourself, and in three months I shall give a concert for the express purpose of introducing you into fashionable life, where, between the Prince’s approbation of your beauty, and my patronage, I flatter myself no one will presume to object to your society.’ Such, Freville, were the circumstances which led to my introduction into the magic circle, and at present no entertainment would be thought perfect without my company. Princes, Dukes, Ambassadors, Duchesses, all court my smiles. Need you then wonder if this little head is turned?” and she laid her taper fingers on it.

“Aigline,” I replied, “you astonish me beyond all expression; I wonder not at your being admired, it could not be otherwise, but that from any motive your father could place you so much under the guidance of Lord Beletrieve, a professed libertine, or launch you without a mother’s protection into scenes of dissipation; you that were educated by her with such watchful and religious strictness.”

“Oh! do not speak of my poor mother,” she exclaimed in a tone of deep feeling; “her death caused me unspeakable affliction, and yet it is but nine months since she died. ‘This mockery of

woe!" and she pointed to her mourning-dress, which she still wore. "Yet my father and I are the gayest of the gay. I once thought such things could not be, but we are launched into the giddy vortex of fashion, and this, more than the cold marble, shuts out her inestimable memory;" so saying, she hurried from the apartment.

That evening Aigline went to the Opera with a Lady Mainstown, who, I understood, acted as her *chaperon* to the brilliant scenes into which she was then an admitted and admired guest. Mr. Tennant remained with me, and in spite of my objections, forced on my acceptance what he termed the loan of a large sum of money.

"If ever you are Sir Rogers's heir," he said smiling, "you can repay me; if not, you are most welcome to partake of the current of wealth so rapidly gliding away."

He sighed deeply, and I thought looked unhappy. Next morning, immediately after breakfast I accompanied Aigline to her music-room, or boudoir. There, in her playful manner, she criticised my dress, recommending to me the first artists of fashion. Admitting that my appearance savoured of the purlieus of St. Giles, I resigned the improvement of my person into her hands, then requested she would acquaint me with the source of her father's wealth.

“ Oh,” she replied, “ I never could find leisure to relate the tedious particulars, so a few words must explain. You are aware that my father is capable of the most generous acts of friendship. Well, some person whom in early life he was the means of setting up in business, realised an immense fortune, and, having no family, on his death-bed he bequeathed to my father upwards of a hundred thousand pounds, twenty of which were settled on my brother George ; but having imbibed some very unreasonable antipathy to the fair daughters of Eve, he did not even mention my name in his testament. Was not that very ungallant of the old merchant ?”

I answered her gaily, but remarked :

“ However, as it is in your father’s possession, you need not regret it.”

I thought she looked grave, but after a moment said :

“ Now, Freville, as you and I are to be domiciled together, in all honesty I must acquaint you that I am on the eve of being married—or am supposed to be so. Consequently, there must be an end to your fine compliments, even if your heart was not devoted to Clara Arnheim, and my hand to Lord Chanceley. Still, regarding you as a friend, I would not admit of the gallantry which, by giving an appearance of trifling and

insincerity to our intercourse, must destroy confidence."

"And who is Lord Chanceley?" I demanded, "and is the hand alone engaged?"

She sighed audibly, then in a low voice replied, "Freville, be satisfied with what I choose to confide, and inquire not too curiously. However, in answer to your first question, Lord Chanceley is next heir to an earldom, and in present possession of a noble fortune,—distinctions enough for any man; at least, so think the denizens of fashion."

"Add and a man of taste," I interrupted, "proved by his selection of you."

She replied hastily:

"Taste and feeling had nothing to say to the preference. He heard that the Prince admired, that Lord Beletrieve patronized me; in these circumstances lie all my attractions. Why, Freville, men of fashion, with a few eccentric exceptions, choose their wives on the judgment of those who affect to be connoisseurs, and, I can tell you, are confoundedly angry if they fail to elicit general admiration."

"Then, Aigline, I have to congratulate you on the prospect of being a Countess. Is Lord Chanceley a man of talent?"

She laughed, exclaiming, "He has but one idea,

that is to imitate his great prototype, Lord Beletrieve. Nevertheless, should we ever be united, he shall find me a devoted wife. As Lady Chanceley, I can burst the trammels of fashion and folly which now encompass me without losing a position rendered, by the delusions of ambition and gratified vanity, absolutely necessary, I verily believe, to my existence."

"How soon," I demanded, "is this union, which, on your side, appears to be one of ambition to be solemnized?"

"Ah!" she replied, "that is the question. Alas! I cannot answer, except, indeed, I could prevail upon Lord Beletrieve to nominate the day."

"Lord Beletrieve, Aigline!" I cried.

"Yes, Freville, my destiny is in his hands; he is the Coryphæus of a set among whom his will or taste is a law."

"And," I interrupted, "he is in love with you himself. Well, Aigline," I added, sarcastically, "after all, ambition being the object, Lady Beletrieve will sound just as well as Lady Chanceley. In either case, I congratulate your Ladyship."

"Nonsense," she angrily answered; "the idea of Lord Beletrieve's marrying is so very absurd. However, next Monday I am to have a concert

honoured by his presence. See him, and judge for yourself."

"Then why should he interfere in your union with Lord Chanceley, Aigline?"

"Another very simple question, yet to which I can give no reasonable answer, further than that I apprehend his interference; yet why or wherefore, I cannot with all my woman's wit divine."

"You are fanciful, Aigline."

"And you provoking, Freville; but judge from the following facts. Three weeks have passed since Lord Chanceley, in all due form, proposed for me; and though, from a knowledge of Lord Beletrieve's influence over my passionless lover, I have frequently attempted to introduce the subject, he has always gracefully eluded it. You know I was at the Opera last night; Lord Chanceley sat by my side, and was quite elaborate in his description of my nuptial jewels, equipages, residences, &c., &c., being pleasing and flattering subjects to which I granted a willing ear, when who should lounge into our box but Lord Beletrieve, who, after a moment, said, 'Chanceley, what is the humour of this? I claim Miss Tennant as my peculiar care.' With an obsequious bow, up jumped Chanceley, making way for his Lordship. Every glass seemed pointed

towards us, and the Prince absolutely smiled and shook his head at Lord Beletrieve. Resolved to put an end to future interruptions, I turned round and said, ‘My Lord, though the subject is very embarrassing, I wish to acquaint you with an event, which I am confident you already know. My nup—’ ‘Ha! stop,’ he cried, laying his hand on my arm; then in a tone of pseudo gallantry he continued, ‘dark browed daughter of Erin’s saintly isle, why destroy a pleasing illusion? At present I consider you quite charming, would you become disagreeable by the tedium of obliging me to listen to what you say I already know. Then if the tale embarrasses, in the name of the loves and graces, desist, desist. At this instant your bloom is perfect, another shade would deepen it into red, vulgar red. Come, no trembling, no blushing, no feeling; they are all in bad taste; nay, are as grotesque as if you took out a crook and I a fife: it would be rather a sheepish fashion, would it not, Aigline? Ill-natured people might ridicule us.’ I could not resist laughing, for to give effect to his words he held up his cane, and whistled a pastoral air. During this time Lord Chanceley looked on quite delighted that his Lordship honoured me by his notice. Now, Freville, should Lord Beletrieve choose to in-

terfere, what chance have I with a man who, almost on the eve of marriage, would resign his place to a rival?"

"At all events, Aigline, it will not be a heart-breaking affair." I said this bitterly.

"Ambition has its griefs, its despairs, as well as love," she answered; "but, Freville, romantic as you are, once introduced into the magic circle, I do not doubt but that I shall see you bow before its idol. Nay more, if you brought your Clara here, learn to value her by the number of her admirers. Pleasant state of society! I wonder what would Britain's stalwart knights of the olden times have thought, who considered that the honour of their stately dames should be as bright and unsullied as the blades of the good swords which they would have buried to the hilt in the breast of any who dared to breathe a word against them, could they rise from their narrow beds, and witness this most extraordinary change of manners, and its still stranger results. But here comes my father: observe, he must not even suspect the indecision of Lord Chanceley's character."

On the Saturday previous to Aigline's concert, I was introduced to Lord Beletrieve. From the accounts I had received, and Mr. Moneymore's grotesque caricature, I expected to see an old beau, dressed in foppish fashion, and with a

flippant, affected address. On the contrary, he was a perfect gentleman, who, without the formal stateliness of the *vieille cour*, possessed its dignified politeness, carefully shunning every observation likely to wound the feelings of his hearers, and by the graceful urbanity of his manners, disguising his innate, indomitable selfishness. His dress was peculiar, but became him well; nankeen tights, blue coat, with gilt buttons, white Marseilles vest. The very slight curve in his back was not unbecoming, and his lameness, which he struggled to conquer, scarcely perceptible. Born to high rank, large fortune, uniting to these the advantages of manly beauty, and talents far above mediocrity, he might have raised himself to the highest place in the senate of his country. But he had sacrificed all to the pursuit of idle pleasures, and at the age of sixty found himself rapidly gliding into the vale of years, and unpossessed of one solid advantage. His health was faded, his fortune involved, his boasted Cosmopolite Club sinking into disrepute. Younger and less endowed men were usurping his place in society,—a new order of things being established. True, he was still the leader of a set who studiously copied his every action, but he had too much intellect for his position—it is a great curse—he began to despise himself; this soured

his temper. He became envious, jealous, misanthropic. There is no misanthropy so profound or dangerous as that which emanates from mortified vanity ; but these discontents had no effect on the outward man. He still continued his graspings after notoriety and conquest ; the bland smile and persuasive manner were the same ; the cold sneer and expressive shrug which had cast scorn on many a noble heart, had lost none of their power. Reputation, hope, virtue, still withered before them. My hand trembles as I acknowledge that, captivated by the graces of this Belial, and yielding to the influence of opinion, in defiance of all I had learned of his character, I became one of his most devoted admirers and imitators. Unhappily, from caprice, he took a fancy to me, showed me some kindness, which did not interfere with his own views, and sought my society. Need I add, the effect which this interview had on my unfixed principles.

Aigline did not spare her raillery, pointing out how much wiser I had spoken for her than acted for myself. Although my greatest ambition was to be initiated into the Cosmopolite Club, still, as I had the good taste not to copy his Lordship's dress, or personal defects, she gratified her playful humour by making her at-

tendant, Ellen, place one of his old perukes on my table ; and sometimes, to oblige her, I sported it of an evening, when we chanced to be without company, which seldom occurred. Strange that men can at once despise and worship the grotesque and polluted idols of fashion !

CHAPTER VII.

ON the evening of Aigline's concert, Lord Beletrieve, by appointment, came early to practise with her. He had a just taste for music, some knowledge of the sciences, and affected a great deal more. Aigline, who looked exquisitely beautiful, and resolved to win his attention, and gain his sanction to her projected nuptials, as he stood by her harp, said :

" My Lord, gratify me by attending patiently while I explain a matter, to me of the deepest consequence, as connected with my future happiness."

" Future happiness !" he retorted, with a theatrical start. Then in a reproachful tone, he said, " Though I confess the unpleasing truth that I am *passé*, still I am not quite so gone as to be appointed father confessor to youth and beauty such as

yours. Besides, we Cosmopolites shun the mysterious doctrines connected with the future. *Dum vivimus vivamus*, is our motto."

"Nay, my Lord," she gravely replied, "I do not mean my happiness in another world, but my prospects in this; so let me entreat of you to be serious."

"Serious," he interrupted, "why it would destroy the present blissful illusion. Serious, where beauty, music, and feasting preside! forbid it, Comus, thou god of mirth and revelry. Nay, Aigline, shade not your fair brow with that frown of anger. Remember, to be serious is to reflect,—to reflect, to reason—to reason, to be sad; for reflection raises to our view disappointment, sorrow, old age, debility, death, and its hideous accompaniments. Is there not some quaint philosophy which goes to prove that all we see most charming in nature is owing to some visual deception? If, then, the loveliness of this sphere we inhabit is but an *ignus fatuus*, a brightness springing from corruption, is it not far better to yield to the illusion, than by dispersing it, rush into the knowledge of stern, uncompromising truths, and evils over which the united powers of man can have no control? Credit me, Aigline, all wisdom consists in enjoying the present; the past we

have lost, the future may not be for us ; we live to-day, to-morrow we may die. Then—

“ Away with melancholy,
Which doleful changes bring.”

He sung this out in admirable style ; I could not resist laughing at Aigline’s defeat, but tears started into her eyes. On the instant, company began to arrive ; she stepped forward to receive them, when turning to me, with his inimitable shrug, Lord Beletrieve remarked :

“ Aigline would raise me to the honour of being the *friend* of the family. Bah ! it is too absurd,” and taking a pinch of snuff, he advanced to one of the royal princes, who, at his request, honoured the concert by his presence.

The concert went off well, even amidst the first singers of the Opera, engaged at a monstrous expense, the connoisseurs gave Aigline a preference. Nor was I without my share of praise. At the concert I first saw Lord Chanceley, a thin, rather low, knock-kneed young man, with light hair and whiskers, and a countenance tolerably handsome. But when Aigline said that all his ideas were absorbed in the study of the great original, Lord Beletrieve, she by no means exaggerated ; and if his imitation was less grotesque than Mr. Money-

more's, it was because his youth and appearance were naturally graceful.

The next three months were passed in a constant round of gaiety. The Tennants were classed among the *élites*, and I was received as Sir Roger Deerhurst's grandson and heir; I taking no pains to contradict a belief so flattering to my vanity, and which won for me the attention of the Vilmont family. I was his Lordship's young relative, of whom he was so proud, that I received many hints that the hand of either of the three Miss Vilmonts was at my command. Nay, Aigline said, that as Lord Vilmont was an influential person, probably he had it in contemplation to bring in an Act to prove the propriety of my marrying the three sisters. Certainly, the rather tight-laced morality which had influenced him to refuse the smallest assistance to the orphans of his predecessor was quite lost in respect for the reputed heir; but the knowledge of his heartless cruelty to them was never forgotten by me.

I sometimes dined with Lord Beletrieve—no small distinction. I was perfectly charmed with his palace: it was a very temple of luxury and refinement. He had but a few pictures and statues, but they were of the finest execution. I remarked that all the latter wore drapery.

“Mr. Deerhurst,” he replied, “I belong to the old school, and by no means approve of introducing undraped figures where ladies are admitted. You smile—mistake me not. I do not allude to what effect they may have on morals—morals do not belong to my function,—the refinement of passion does. A woman should be as delicate as the sensitive plant, shrinking from all that is bold or coarse. When she loses this delicacy, her greatest charm is gone. You seem astonished at what I say, but remember, that what we lose in ourselves we exact from others. However, except when I meet with a *rara avis*, like Aigline Tenant, I generally shun an introduction to your young misses. Their insipidity and self-satisfaction offer nothing attractive to my taste ; which though founded on epicurean philosophy, nevertheless can be satisfied with nothing short of intellect.”

Lord Chanceley went to his seat in Devonshire to make splendid preparations for his nuptials, which were to take place on his return ; still he fixed no period for either. About this time, there was an *on dit* circulated, relative to Lord Beltrieve, which excited a sensation. A pretty Florentine of rank, imbibing some taste for the stage, eloped from her friends, and appeared at the

Italian Opera, in London. Her *début* was crowded to excess, but she proved a failure. She had a sweet voice, but no compass ; a lovely form, but no dignity or dramatic powers. The poor Italian was in despair. In this extremity, numerous admirers arose to offer her protection. Strange to say, she gave Lord Beletrieve the preference, and loved him in all sincerity. Fifteen months she dwelt beneath his roof, when she was seized with fever. He then, in defiance of the attendant physician, had her removed.

“My Lord,” exclaimed the doctor, “if removed in this state, I cannot answer for her life. In such a house as this, there is no fear of infection.”

“Bah !” answered his Lordship ; “I never thought of infection. But if the signora die^s here, I shall fancy it a charnel-house.”

Well, she was removed—died ; and next day, speaking on the subject, he remarked :

“On the whole, I congratulate myself. Poor *Mélanche* (so she was called), was so determined, like the poet’s *Melancholy*, in ‘marking me for her own’ that I should have found a difficulty in shaking her off, and I began to tire of her. In fact, she was embarrassing me—death has settled the business satisfactorily.”

Aigline was quite indignant when this circum-

stance reached her; and with good feeling regretted my intimacy with his Lordship. I retorted, and she then replied sadly :

“Freville, we are both rushing swiftly into ruin. One difference, however, exists between us ; though I have not courage to retreat, I see and feel my danger ; whereas, you are self-deceived,—it may be, wilfully so.”

“Nay, Aigline, you are severe, and the most prejudiced person I ever met.”

“I believe you are right,” she answered ; “ but I dislike him so utterly, that sometimes as he hangs over me, with his fixed smile, I feel a perfect revulsion of my blood, and then I have a presentiment that he is the ruler of my destiny. And oh ! surely if he is, it must be evil, for no good could spring from him, the mocker of all that is sacred. Wonder not then at my great regret at seeing you so completely under his influence : even my father, in general so little observant, was startled yesterday at the freedom of some of your opinions. Oh ! Freville, wild and thoughtless as I am, from the inmost recesses of my soul I reverence virtue. My marriage with Lord Chanceley is the charm which shall dissolve my present enchantment, and then you shall see me act up to my amiable mother’s precepts. Alas ! that I ever deviated from them ! One great difference, Freville, exists

between you and me,—you are rushing blindly forward on your career ; whereas, I see and tremble at my danger, and still, as if bound by some talismanic power, have not strength to escape. Freville, it was my folly which first introduced you to Lord Beletrieve, and should you suffer in morals or happiness, I never can forgive myself.”

“Is my happiness then so dear to you, Aigline ?” I repeated with emotion.

“Psha ! this is nonsense,” she answered, as she rushed from the apartment.

The following week we went to the theatre ; Mr. Tennant accompanied us every instant ;—in an under voice, for she did not wish her father to know her dislike to Lord Beletrieve—Aigline congratulated herself on his Lordship’s absence. She certainly looked exquisitely beautiful and happy. More than once she whispered, “Methinks, Freville, that even the air of this heated theatre appears as fresh as early spring, when it is not polluted with the Beletrieve presence.”

“And with so strong a prejudice,” I answered, “why did you ever admit his acquaintance, and why do you not now decline it ? Really, Aigline, this inconsistency looks like affectation.”

“Why did I ever admit his acquaintance ! to that question, I positively cannot give any satis-

factory answer. Do you remember, Freville, the tale in the 'Arabian Nights,' over which we were wont to laugh so heartily, where Sinbad the sailor let the old man mount on his back, and could not afterwards shake him off? For every attempt he made, the old man stuck more closely to him. Now I am just in the same predicament: in my ignorance or vanity I let Lord Beletrieve assume a command over me, and now I cannot cast it off, though I pledge you my word I have made several attempts; nay, more, he has discovered my sentiments, and the excitement of conquering my dislike teaches him to cling to me with a pertinacity truly alarming."

"Are you afraid he will strangle or crush you?" I demanded, smiling.

"Figuratively! if I do not escape, he will strangle my character and crush my happiness."

On our return from the theatre we learned that Lord Chanceley had called at past eleven, and left word, for Miss Tennant, that he had only just arrived, but that being impatient to see her he had waived all ceremony. We regretted having been absent, but Aigline was much pleased at this proof of his affection.

"I did not expect he would have been so ardent," said she to me; "and now, Freville, I agree with you, I have been fanciful and unjust,

but when the heart is deeply interested on any subject, it is apt to get suspicious and doubtful."

Again on the following morning Lord Chanceley called. Aigline, who was at her toilet, for it was before our very late breakfast, sent to request he would wait, as she would be down in a few minutes.

"Tell her," he replied, "that what makes me up so early, is, that I received a note from Lord Beletrieve, requesting me to breakfast with him; however, I shall again call in the course of the day, as I am all impatience to see her."

Concluding Lord Chanceley would not wish for interruption during his visit, I took one of Mr. Tennant's horses and rode off to Hampton Court, to execute a commission for him with a friend. It was a beautiful afternoon, and I was easily prevailed upon to spend the day, so I did not return to London until a late hour, near midnight. I inquired for Miss Tennant; understanding she had retired to rest, I was following her example, when Mr. Tennant, looking fearfully ill and excited, came out of the drawing-room and requested that I would remain, as he had much to say; I readily consented. Closing the door he exclaimed:

"Freville, here is a most unfortunate business. Aigline in expectation of Lord Chanceley not

only remained at home all day, but wrote a note expressive of her joy at his return, and regret that she had missed seeing him when he was so obliging as to call, and requested the pleasure of his company to dinner. To prevent the possibility of any mistake relative to his receiving it, I drove myself to the hotel, saw his servant, who assured me that when his Lordship was going out he had said, 'I mean to dine with the Tennants, probably we shall go to the Opera, so be in readiness.' All this was what might be expected, so I returned to acquaint Aigline and give orders; then not to interrupt her expected *tête-à-tête*, drove out.

"On returning to dinner I found Lord Chanceley had not called. Poor Aigline was trembling with disappointment and excitement,—I much fear she is attached to him;—well, we waited dinner until past ten, then dismissed it untouched; another half hour elapsed, and I was going to call to inquire if he had received Aigline's note, when a waiter from the hotel arrived with one to me from his Lordship, in which he commenced with an elaborate apology for not having sent an earlier answer to my invitation for dinner; regretted he could not accept it, but, all things considered, he thought it in better taste not to do so, as he found his uncle refused to grant his consent to his union with Miss Tennant. He would not wound

my feelings by repeating his uncle's unanswerable objections ; he considered doing so would be in bad taste ; and he added, that ere I received his note he should be on his way to the continent, where he would continue for a year or two, or until Miss Tennant was married, since after the publicity of his admiration, though happily it did not compromise his honour,—as he never could form an engagement without his uncle's consent,—he thought it would be in bad taste to meet her, which must be the case if he continued in London. He concluded his heartless, insolent rejection of my daughter, by requesting that I would present his best regards and compliments to her. So much, Freville, for the bad taste of this contemptible sprig of nobility !”

I was at a loss for an answer to soothe Mr. Tennant, who positively looked half distracted, so I muttered something about Aigline having had a good escape from such a fop, and then with a happy contradiction said, perhaps, after a time, his uncle may consent.

“ Psha !” he answered indignantly, “ the uncle is a mere subterfuge to soften down his unmanly desertion of a girl he so ardently sought ; the only uncle he has is a step-uncle on his mother's side, who has no authority or influence over him ; and the only part of his letter that is true is that

respecting his departure. He left London in a chariot and four before one this day, and ordered his note to me not to be delivered till past ten in the afternoon."

"Fool!" he exclaimed, after a pause, "did he think it necessary to fly from my beautiful daughter who, in all but the vain and artificial institutes of society, is far his superior. Heaven, how I lessened her and myself when I sacrificed the truly respectable in pursuit of the false glare of fashion! But I am severely punished." He sighed deeply and then continued, "The step I wished to take was to challenge Lord Chanceley, but Aigline suffered torture from the very idea; first, she says, waiving to her the dearest of all considerations—my safety, it would only give publicity to her mortification; and next, if Lord Chanceley wished to shirk out of the duel, a very probable suggestion, for most villains are cowards, he could do so on the pretence that a patrician would be disgraced by a meeting with a shipwright." A laugh of scorn almost amounting to a convulsion, distorted Tennant's countenance as he spoke these words, and he continued for some time struggling to regain composure.

I then took an opportunity of pressing on him the justice of Aigline's remarks, and the folly of thinking of pursuing Lord Chanceley to the continent with a challenge. I argued that the best

plan would be to appear as much as possible in public, observing that in a week or two the London season would be at its height, and that although Aigline's engagement had been much spoken of, still in Lord Chanceley's absence the subject would be soon forgotten, for with her youth, beauty, and accomplishments, she might expect to make even a superior match. He thanked me for my advice, which seemed to soothe his wounded pride. We continued up conversing till a late hour. He then retired to rest looking very sad but more tranquil. I must have been callous to all good feeling if I had not sympathized in the Tennants' disappointment, and I watched impatiently for an interview with Aigline.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE following morning I entered the breakfast parlour earlier than usual. Mr. Tennant had gone out, and Aigline, I understood, had ordered coffee in the music room ; there I followed, and tapping gently at the door playfully demanded, " May I come in ?"

" Oh ! certainly, Freville," she answered, opening it.

I observed she was much flushed, and her dark eyes actually sparkled like brilliants.

" Sit down," she said, pointing to a couch, " till we talk over my rejection : positively—though I foresaw its probability, and traced its source,—I am mortified beyond endurance."

I took her hand in mine, and in soft accents said,—" Dear Aigline, may I hope that no tenderer feelings than offended pride agitate you thus ?"

She answered passionately, "Really, Freville, you provoke me. So many months in London, entering into its dissipation, and still remaining in your pastoral style? Never was there so incongruous a being: why you might as well expect to see flowers spring up in the middle of Bond Street, as love among the Beletrieve set. If such a *lusus naturæ* occurred, both flowers and love would be instantly crushed."

"Then, Aigline, if you were ever so angry, I cannot feel as deeply for the wounds of mortified vanity as I would for those of true affection; and much as I despise Lord Chanceley, I do not half so much condemn his desertion."

"Admirable speech, Freville! Your wisdom has but one fault—you do not exercise it in your own case, but let us not quarrel on the subject. I believe I am in a bad humour, so excuse me. As to blaming Lord Chanceley, who ever thought of that but my father? Not I, surely; I never was deceived. Did I not, from the beginning, assure you that his attachment to me merely originated in the admiration I elicited from others, and that my fate was in Lord Beletrieve's hands? You thought me fanciful, but the result has proved my discernment."

"Is it possible," I demanded, "that Lord Beletrieve has interfered?"

“Unquestionably,” she answered, “and only that it might encroach too much on your time, I would explain the diplomatic manner in which his Lordship persuaded, or rather tempted my worthy lover, Lord Chanceley, to desert me.”

“Aigline, interested as I am in all that concerns you, how can you speak of my time ; it is never better engaged than when attending to matters which affect your welfare.”

“It is kindly said, Freville, more particularly as I have been somewhat petulant ; but this disappointment to my hopes grieves me to the soul. If it was a vain ambition to look forward with pleasure to be a Countess, I admit the impeachment ; yet that is not my deepest regret ; but the enchantment Lord Beletrieve has cast around me cannot now be broken. I both dislike and fear that man, and as much as you are pleased with him, you will admit I have reason, when I explain how he broke off my match. In the first place, Freville, you must remember what I have before mentioned, that my attendant, Ellen, is sister to Pat Mulcahy, who by his cajoling Irish flattery, ready wit, and obliging temper, has become such a favourite with Lord Beletrieve that he attends him at breakfast and lunch ; in short, though not his valet, he is always about his person. It appears that although Lord Beletrieve never spoke

of my engagement with Lord Chanceley, and in his happy manner always eluded the subject, from the commencement he watched its progress, and when it was mentioned at the club or elsewhere, gave his inimitable shrug or odious sneer,—the first expressive of doubt, the latter of scorn. Though aware of his power, and from some motive—to me at least impenetrable—resolved that I should not be married to Lord Chanceley, he took no steps to prevent our union, but must have been on the watch; for last night, while we were at the theatre, Lord Chanceley arrived from Devon, and, as you already know, called here instantly. This was reported to Lord Beletrieve, who wrote him an invitation to an early breakfast on the following morning. The note was sent by Pat, who first posted off to acquaint Ellen, and who met Lord Chanceley just returning from this house, and heard him mutter, ‘Rather unfortunate, I hoped to spend the morning with Aigline’—however, he accepted the invitation. Still everything proves that he had returned from Devon full of our union, and apparently more impatiently in love than ever; but the heart of a fool is as empty as his head. So much for my preface, Freville; let us now enter Lord Beletrieve’s *boudoir*, in which he seldom receives male visitors, and I may say, *en passant*, that it is consi-

dered to be one of the most unique and luxuriously fitted up apartments in London. Wrapped in a Polish pelisse of puce coloured satin, all furred with sables,—for in spite of the heat of the weather the morning air blew too fresh for his exhausted frame,—Lord Beletrieve reclined on a splendid couch, his gouty foot supported on an embroidered cushion, near to which, on another, but of larger dimensions, rested his two pet Blenheims, Sappho and Anacreon, their eyes fixed on his Lordship's face, and their long ears cocked to watch his pleasure. Near to him stood a table of ebony and silver, with its rich appointments of Sèvres china and gold plate; and a few steps beyond, on his left knee, knelt Pat, while on his right he supported a massive tray covered with the more substantial viands to woo his Lordship's sickly appetite, which, like the lean kine of Pharaoh's dream, shrank and withered almost to loathing amid the offered abundance. At the other side of the couch was placed a large table covered with papers, pamphlets, and periodicals; over this the full light was admitted to fall, for observe, in the rest of the apartment it was allayed by the rose-coloured curtains so as to suit his Lordship's faded complexion. At this table sat a youth of an interesting appearance, whose occupation was to read out paragraphs from the

papers or books. One more object is worthy of observation, a fine Newfoundland dog of the larger size, called Rochester, kept guard at the door, and never admitted any person to enter without his master's command, and in his absence was so ferocious that Blue Beard's wife, with all her curiosity, would not have dared to approach. As the hour appointed for Lord Chanceley's coming was much earlier than Lord Beletrieve's usual one for rising, Pat observed the compressing of his brow, and the peevish pish, as he turned over with his fork the delicacies he could not enjoy—more violent symptoms of anger he was too refined to display. At that instant a deep growl from Rochester announced approaching steps.

“ ‘Is that Chanceley?’ his Lordship called out languidly. An affirmative was given. ‘Here, Rochester, let him in.’ The dog obeyed, and Lord Chanceley entered, but started as Rochester stood before him.

“ ‘No fear, Chanceley,’ exclaimed Lord Beletrieve, ‘you are an expected guest; but I have such a perfect horror of intrusion, that I take every means to guard against it.

“ ‘Do you know, Chanceley,’ said his Lordship, as he observed the keen appetite with which he discussed the delicacies, ‘I almost envy you having

an appetite for your breakfast. My epicurean system is greatly upset without one. After all, of what advantage is a luxurious table when a man cannot enjoy it? I am thinking that a short sojourn in the country might be useful to me; the life we Cosmopolites lead is not healthy, and I require renovation.'

"Chanceley stopped eating to reply, and Lord Beletrieve continued:

" 'I understand that you have got a pretty lodge on the south coast of Devonshire, and that you have lately fitted it up in good taste, excellent taste, gentlemanly taste, though some of the Club would have disputed the point. But to return to the lodge, could you let me have it for a month or two—your own terms—or if you did not consider me an incumbrance, and had no object in view that my going might interfere with, I would gladly accompany you there as a visitor. Certainly it would be against my usual habits, for in general I hate to be a visitor,—home or an hotel for me; but, Chanceley, when you are in question, there is no sacrifice, for you are an excellent fellow, and a most agreeable companion.'

"Lord Chanceley was perfectly astounded; in his vainest moment he had never dreamt of being considered excellent or agreeable. It certainly was a new discovery. So, looking very foolish, he

poured out a torrent of gratitude for the compliment, adding, 'how honoured he would feel by his company.'

" 'Then am I to consider the thing settled? How soon shall we set off for Devonshire?' inquired Lord Beletrieve.'

" 'Oh! really, my Lord, I am greatly honoured by your intention of coming to me, and your high opinion of my merits, which, when once known, will at once bring me into distinction, still I venture to solicit you would carry your kindness still further, and have me balloted for at the Cosmopolite Club—one word from your Lordship, and I should be admitted.'

" 'Of course you would,' haughtily retorted Lord Beletrieve, 'but this is an after consideration; what has it to do with my going to Devonshire?'

" 'Oh! true, my Lord, but I am so confused, so flattered. Aigline—you admire her so much, you would perhaps rather consider her an acquisition, if not, I can postpone my marriage until after you return. No girl of common delicacy could press a man to hurry his union.'

" With well acted surprise Lord Beletrieve replied: 'Positively, Chanceley, you rave; have you got a fever, or was your *chasse de café* too strong? For myself, I never take one in the

morning. I asked your leave to go to Devonshire either as your tenant or visitor, and you burst forth into a wild rhodomontade about admiration, marriage, and Lord knows what.'

" 'Oh! my Lord, it is quite true; but I am so confused, so miserable till I obtain your full approbation of my taste. Of course had I not been certain of it, I would not have gone so far; if you recollect, I have frequently told you that I had something of the utmost consequence to consult you about, but you always shunned the explanation, and our relationship is so distant, I had no right to press my affairs on your notice.'

" 'Connexion, Lord Chanceley, if you please,' replied Lord Beletrieve, with a sneer; 'but in regard to inattention, of which you seem to complain, forgive me if I say that it must have proceeded from want of tact on your side. It may be that you addressed me while I was discussing my wine, or engaged at whist, or *écarté*, or flirting with a pretty girl, or soothing the wounded feelings of one unreasonable enough to reproach me for a change of sentiment towards her — the mere result of my constitutional inconstancy. But now I am at leisure to act as confidant: you will not, however, be prolix—the hour for my bath is approaching.'

" After much stammering, blushing, nay, trem-

bling, Lord Chanceley said: ‘You must have observed my attention to Miss Tennant, and, if you have not already learned it from report, I wish to acquaint you that I have proposed for her, am accepted, and that I hope we shall soon be united; and, if your Lordship would accompany us to Devonshire, just fitted up for her reception, she and I would do all in our power to amuse you.’

“Without noticing the latter part of the speech, assuming a look of wonder, Lord Beletrieve exclaimed:

“‘Chanceley, can you be serious? Propose for Aigline Tennant, the shipbuilder’s daughter!’

“Almost electrified, Lord Chanceley cried out:

“‘My Lord, it was yourself first introduced her to me!—extolling her so highly, that I concluded you were the intimate friend of her family.’

“‘Friend!’ emphatically repeated Lord Beletrieve, with his shrug, and look of ineffable scorn.

“With more energy than he seemed capable of, Lord Chanceley continued:

“‘Yes, friend; and permit me to say, that it was your notice, and the Prince’s admiration, which first attracted me to Miss Tennant: you both said that she was beautiful, and a first-rate musician. Then half the young men in London

spoke in raptures of her, toasted her, danced with her; so I thought if I could obtain her in marriage, I should gain a prize, and that you, my Lord, would approve of my taste, and the Prince perhaps notice her, and say that Lady Chanceley was one of the most beautiful women in England; nay, in spite of her youth, he might fall in love with her. What other motives could have led to my proposal? I am no judge of beauty—almost dislike music, and was a little afraid of Miss Tennant's ready wit; and as to money, I do not require it,' he paused, for want of breath.

“ ‘Be calm—not so vehement,’ said Lord Beltrieve, playfully, ‘all this heat of temper, more particularly when no one disputes your opinion, is in bad taste; and, if known, would for ever exclude you from the Cosmopolite Club. Now, hear my opinion: Aigline Tennant is young, beautiful, accomplished; as to her position, her father was lately a shipbuilder in the city of Cork, in Ireland; as to her wealth, he is squandering it in every direction, for the delectable purpose of forcing himself and his daughter into a society to which they are not entitled, and which is likely to prove as unfortunate, as it is expensive.’

“ ‘Then, as she possesses so many advantages, and as her union with me will give her station,

perhaps, after all, I was fortunate in my choice,' said Lord Chanceley, timidly.

"Lord Beletrieve raised himself on the couch, and fixing his eyes on Lord Chanceley, in a proud, measured tone, said :

" ' Did *I* ever marry ?—Did I, because I saw many a girl of inferior rank, young, beautiful, and accomplished, think it necessary to raise them to my position ? Can you suppose such a thing possible ? Bah !' and his Lordship took a long pinch of snuff.

" ' I was not aware,' said Lord Chanceley, with a sigh, ' that you had any objection to marriage ; on the contrary, I have heard you speak on the subject as if you considered it as a respectable institution.'

" ' And so I do—for my friends,' said Lord Beletrieve, with his sickly smile. ' Let those who will, enter into the indissoluble bonds of matrimony ; for me, my philosophy refines on pleasure, and, consequently, though no versifier of words, or publisher of rhymes, I am fanciful and classical enough to know that the blaze of Hymen's torch shines so brightly, that the illusions of the imagination disperse before it,—then vanish the Graces, Love flutters awhile, and flies off. To supply their place, enter household economy and prudence, and, to crown, or rather to destroy all

satiety supervenes. Bah !' and he took another pinch of snuff. ' Now, Chanceley, the question is, whether it is better for a man to be respectable or happy.'

" ' The Prince is married !' exclaimed Lord Chanceley, with emotion ; ' and, independent of royalty, he is allowed to be the finest, most fashionable man in England.'

" ' The Prince *is* married !' reiterated Lord Beletrieve, in a slow, monotonous tone, ' a happy illustration of the advantages of marriage. Chanceley, your hits are so piquant, that I must introduce you to the Club, as a *bel-esprit* ; yet, perhaps, it were as well not ; people might laugh at Lord Chanceley looking to royalty as his guiding star ! Psha ! but vanity makes fools of us all.'

" ' Good Heaven !' exclaimed Lord Chanceley, in a tone of unaffected distress, ' what am I to do ? Oh ! that I had known your sentiments, even a month since ! I have ordered the equipages, jewellery ; fitted up my residences—'

" ' All,' interrupted Lord Beletrieve, with a forced laugh, ' for the shipwright's daughter ! By the bye, Chanceley, will you call the mechanic papa, or father ?—I think the former sounds very sheepish and affected.'

" ' Lord Beletrieve, do not with your scorn drive me out of my reason !' cried Lord Chanceley ;

‘I would rather have all London hold me in contempt than your Lordship.’

“A complacent smile passed over the features of the great prototype of fashion at the sincere devotion of his votary; his self-love was so gratified, that it soothed his caustic humour, and he resolved to carry his point in a gentler manner.

“‘Chanceley, how far have you gone in this business? And do you really love the girl, Aigline Tennant?’ he inquired.

“‘All was settled for our union before I went to Devonshire; but I did not fix the day: first, I was in no hurry, for my bays were not broken in properly, and I had lent some of the diamonds to my dowager aunt, who was in Rome; then there was a delay caused by their re-setting; in short, I wished to introduce my bride with *éclat*, and consequently was resolved not to celebrate our nuptials till all was prepared. As to loving Miss Tennant, I really think I do; indeed, I am quite sure I do,’ and as he made the assurance he looked, if possible, more vacant and unmeaning than ever.

“Lord Beletrieve smiled, and his eyes glittered with suppressed laughter, as he said: ‘Chanceley, mark my experience; your case is not desperate;

no fever in the blood—no oppression of the heart: you will survive the loss of Miss Tennant.’

“‘That is not the danger I apprehend,’ said Lord Chanceley, with his wisest look; ‘but the poor girl is desperately in love with me, so much so, that when I showed her the designs for her diamonds and equipages, she scarcely noticed them, saying, ‘My Lord, my ambition is to be your wife; on all the minor preparations consult your own taste—what pleases you must meet my approval.’”

“‘A very pretty set speech,’ said Lord Beletrieve, with a sneer, ‘and better again, true, if she had merely substituted the word lady for wife.’

“‘If I break off our match, I shall pity her from my soul,’ said Lord Chanceley, with a sentimental sigh.

“‘And so shall I,” retorted Lord Beletrieve, ‘for the prize of a coronet to one so ambitious is a loss not easily supplied. *A-propos*, the next ship Tennant builds, we may expect to see an Earl’s coronet in front, and the Chanceley arms flaming on the flag. I hope the fellow won’t have the impudence to have it on some trading vessel, a cargo of Munster pigs; only think, arrived

at Wapping, yesterday, the trading vessel, Chanceley, Cargo—Pigs, Master—Tennant.’

“ ‘Damnation!’ exclaimed Lord Chanceley, stamping. ‘I would hang myself first!’

“ ‘A swinging way of ending your romance,’ said Lord Beletrieve; ‘as to me I would prefer some gentler method.’

“ ‘Oh, my Lord!’ cried Lord Chanceley, in a tone of entreaty, ‘if you would deign to assist me out of this infernal scrape, you would confer the greatest obligation.’

“ ‘Excuse me,’ he coldly answered, ‘but I never intermeddle in other people’s business; that, indeed, would be lessening my dignity; but probably some disagreement relative to the settlement may arise to relieve you.’

“ ‘No hope, then!’ sighed his Lordship, ‘all has been concluded: Mr. Tennant left every thing to my arrangement. I must say that he acted in the most gentlemanly manner.’

“ ‘Thanks to the shipwright,’ contemptuously replied Lord Beletrieve, ‘so he permitted his patrician son-in-law to manage his own fortune! Certainly love is stupid as well as blind, when you consider his doing so a condescension.’

“ ‘Could your Lordship suggest any other method?’ demanded Lord Chanceley.

“Suggest! why, Chanceley, I suggest nothing, I merely remark; and now I think on it, I ought to sympathize with you, for, many years ago, so long that I sincerely wish my mother had postponed my birth some twenty years, in place of which she set the good town of Norwich and its neighbourhood nearly on fire to publish the birth of her heir—never was there such an absurdity! I fell desperately in love with a pretty maiden, a baronet’s daughter. She proved willing, arrangements for our marriage were being prepared, I went to the races of Ascot, and saw a prettier girl, at least a more novel one. I changed my mind about the first, and candidly told her friends so. Well, her brother challenged me; we fought; I got a slight graze of his ball across my left shoulder; I then fired my pistols in the air; seconds interfered; I explained my constitutional inconstancy; the brother saw his folly,—we shook hands, and I retired from the field freed from the incumbrance of a wife, and crowned with laurels as a duellist.’

“Lord Chanceley’s agitation increased, he paced up and down, then turning to Lord Beletrieve, exclaimed:—‘I am not a duellist, I condemn it on principle.’

“‘On what principle, may I ask?’ retorted Lord Beletrieve.

“ ‘On many,’ exclaimed Lord Chanceley ; ‘ and then I am a bad shot, and Mr. Tennant is an excellent one, for one day when we sailed down to Greenwich, just for his amusement he was firing at some sea-gulls, and brought as many as he fancied down, whereas, I could not hit one.’

“ ‘If he is so clever at knocking down gulls, you certainly would be in danger, and do perfectly right to avoid him,’ drily answered Lord Beletrieve ; ‘ and fear being a principle not easily overcome, I conclude I may as well now pay you my congratulations on your marriage. It is probable, when once it takes place, I shall not see much of you.’

“ Saying these words, he rose from the couch, and, addressing the youth, who sat near the table, said, ‘ See if my bath is in readiness.’

“ ‘For Heaven’s sake, Lord Beletrieve, do not retire till you help me out of this scrape,’ cried Chanceley. ‘ I repeat that it was your admiration of Miss Tennant which first led me on. Last night I supped with some of the Guards, and mentioned my engagement. Several of them toasted her, saying she was the loveliest girl in England ; and Denby, and Morely said they always thought you would be the happy man, as you seemed quite devoted to her : positively at the time I was so

elated at all this, I considered myself the luckiest being alive.'

" 'And, Chanceley, what is your opinion this morning?' demanded his Lordship, smiling.

" 'That I am a damned fool, and a most unfortunate fellow.'

" 'No contradiction, Chanceley; but what do you mean to do?'

" 'Alas! I fear I have no choice, I am bound by honour'

" 'Honour and a shipwright,' sneered out Lord Beletrieve.

" 'Oh! my Lord,' he replied, 'you are so able, so experienced, that if you pleased you could assist me.'

" 'Impossible, Chanceley; why should I stand between a pretty clever girl and her good fortune? It is against my principle, as much as duelling is abhorrent to yours. Now, were I your uncle or guardian, it would be quite a different thing, for I have known matches when the day was fixed, the *trousseau* purchased, the parson engaged, nay, the ring fitted, broken off by the interference of a father or an uncle.'

" 'I have a step-uncle, but the old man neither has or ever had any authority over me,' answered Lord Chanceley.

“ ‘Pish !’ exclaimed Lord Beletrieve, as he muttered, ‘ what an incorrigible logger-headed fool !’ ” then aloud he said, ‘ Chanceley, other young men so entangled as you are would be quite satisfied with making use of the uncle’s name, and, having written a letter of regret on his interference to the lady’s guardian or father, if she had one, would be off to the continent, and so avoid explanations, challenges, &c., and—but I trust you have too much honour to act that way by the shipwright’s daughter,’ and he gave a scornful laugh. At the instant his valet entered to attend him to the bath. ‘ One word more, my Lord,’ cried out Lord Chanceley.

“ ‘ Excuse me, but I have already innovated on my usual habits, so good bye, and when I am gone have a care of Rochester, he is as fond of tricks, and as dangerous as his celebrated namesake. Here, Rochester, show Lord Chanceley out.’ ”

“ This was said sarcastically ; the well-trained dog wagged his tail, growled, then looked so fierce that, making a hasty salute, his Lordship hurried from the apartment.

“ Freville,” added Aigline, with a sigh, “ so closed the scene that ended my projected marriage. From my father you have learned the manner in which Lord Chanceley, acting upon Lord Bele-

trieve's hints, threw me off. Would I never had been engaged to him, for I fear his jilting me in so cold a manner will prove a serious disadvantage !”

“Aigline, can all this be true? And can the word of a servant be relied on? Does it appear probable that Lord Beletrieve would speak in this confidential manner before domestics likely to repeat what he said?”

“It is quite in character with his incalculable vanity. He feels that he is on the decline, and he is proud of every circumstance or report which proves his influence, even over fools. The tribute formerly offered to him by love or admiration, he now commands by fear. What mother who wants to marry her daughters will not try to conciliate him, or what girl not listen to his fulsome flattery, if by so doing she could turn aside his well-practised weapon of scorn? No; every word I repeated is correctly true, and I only rejoice that my honourable-minded, though not titled father, remains in ignorance of what I have confided to you.”

“There, Aigline, I quite differ with you. I think you should fully acquaint him with the circumstance, and tell him never again to admit Lord Beletrieve; indeed, I think none of us should acknowledge him.”

She gave her merry laugh, as with her usual vivacity she exclaimed :

“Positively, Freville, you are *distract*. What ? Show the man of highest fashion in England, the companion of Princes, ‘the admired of all admirers,’ our proud indignation ? Shut our door against him, and shun his acquaintance ? Who would do this ? Mr. Tennant and his pretty daughter, the *nouveaux riches*, the Paddies from Cork ! Excellent ; why it would be like the fly on the lion’s mane, with this difference, the noble lion would not crush the fly, but the noble Lord Beletrieve would hold us up as objects of derision.”

“You speak,” said I, angrily, “as if you were pigmies, and he a giant.”

“And such in the hemisphere of fashion are our relative positions,” she replied.

“Then quit it, dear Aigline. Remember how cheerful and admired you were in Cork ; how happy and respected your father was ; and now, if with your increase of wealth you returned, you would be esteemed of the first consequence.”

“Your remarks appear just,” she answered, sadly : “but I feel the impossibility of either my father or myself following your advice.”

“And why so, Aigline ? What prevents your going to Ireland ?”

“ Nothing ; and I have no doubt that we could get back our pretty house or villa on Glanmire Water, and find all the features of the landscape the same as when three years since we quitted it. But, Freville, reflect on the alteration wrought in our minds : think you that I, after being a London belle, and a Countess in expectancy, could fall back to my homely habits and acquaintances ? Impossible ! And without the stimulant of gaining an independence ? Think you, my father could resume his habits of patient industry ? And even were these points gained, would the grave give back its dead ? No, no ; there is no retrogression for us. Let it lead to weal or woe, onward we must go in the path we have chosen ; and now, Freville, ere we join my father, promise not to show in your manner the least resentment or indignation towards Lord Beletrieve. In the first place it would be absurd, in the next it would only compromise our respectability ; for, as you justly observed, our best plan is to appear in company as if nothing had occurred, though I much doubt whether we shall have that opportunity.

CHAPTER IX.

PREVIOUSLY to Lord Chanceley's departure, Mr. Tennant had sent out cards for a dinner-party. Lord Beletrieve promised to come, and, as usual, all was arranged under his auspices; not only Aigline but Mr. Tennant looked forward to this party as an event of consequence. "It will," she observed, "determine the line of society, and how far Lord Chanceley's insolent desertion has injured me." As the day approached, Mr. Tennant's anxiety increased, for he heard that a hundred reports had been circulated to his disadvantage by Lord Chanceley's friends; but what wounded him most was the sarcasms thrown out about his having been a shipwright, and the soubriquet, the mechanic's pretty daughter, being attached to Aigline, who, to soothe him, affected to laugh, and be amused, though she was seriously annoyed.

"You go to the Opera this evening with Lady

Mainstoun?" said Mr. Tennant to Aigline, as they sat at dinner.

"I hope so," she replied; "there is a new piece coming out; it was so arranged by her Ladyship last week."

A few moments after, a servant entered to say, that Lady Mainstoun presented compliments, and regretted she could not call for Miss Tennant.

Mr. Tennant looked miserable. Aigline coloured, but, smiling, turned to him, saying,

"Dear father, I have got the music of the new opera, so cheer up; and if you remain at home, Freville and I will practise it for you. I, at least, can feel no regret."

He kissed her forehead, exclaiming, "My lovely, beloved child, I should have been your guardian; but, influenced by a weak pride, have led you into danger. Should your happiness suffer, I shall be miserable beyond expression."

She answered affectionately, and we spent the evening cheerfully enough. Thursday morning, as we sat at breakfast, Mr. Tennant received a note: opening it, he read,

"Lord Beletrieve regrets he cannot have the pleasure of dining with Mr. Tennant.

"Thursday, 9th."

"This is most unfortunate," he said, as he handed it to Aigline.

"Still, we might have expected it," she replied; "is he not laid up with the gout?"

"No, Aigline," he answered, "for I saw him yesterday riding in St. James's Park with the Prince. The awkward part of the business is, that at his instigation I invited Lord Proudly and Colonel Arganza, two of the haughtiest men in England, and who, I understand, before they sent their answers, inquired particularly whether Lord Beletrieve would come. Now in our rank of life, the forms of good breeding must be observed; but when we are mad enough to run after the aristocracy, if they are annoyed, there is no check to their insolence."

"My dear father, do not be uneasy about Colonel Arganza and Lord Proudly. Just half an hour before dinner they will send their excuses."

"Impossible," he answered, petulantly, "it would be unlike gentlemen."

"Yes," said Aigline, "but it would be stylish, a mark of self-consequence, to show a perfect indifference to the convenience or feelings of others. In short, it would be fashionable."

The event proved Aigline's discernment. Just as dinner was announced, excuses, for they

offered no apologies, from Lord Proudly, Colonel Arganza, and three or four more of the Cosmopolite set, were sent; so seven persons sat down to a dinner laid for twelve. All was sumptuous, and in good taste; but it was a *triste* business. The company were disappointed, Mr. Tennant was oppressed, Aigline the only lady at table, for Lady Mainstoun, and two other ladies, had sent their excuses. Before ten o'clock the party broke up, and so ended an entertainment attended with great expence, for, originally, eighteen had been expected.

“What is to be done?” said Mr. Tennant, despairingly. “It is quite evident that Lord Chanceley’s business has given us the appearance of adventurers, and I have gained nothing by my forbearance. Would to heaven I had challenged the fellow! That would have been some satisfaction. Even if I could leave London at present, which circumstances forbid, I would not fly, as if we were conscious of being disgraced. But were it possible for you, Aigline, once more to enter into society with your former *éclat*, then when the season is over, we could quit London without giving rise to invidious remarks. On my side, I can answer that unless some unforeseen advantage occur, we shall never again return to its scenes of frivolity and dissipa-

tion. Say, can your woman's wit suggest no means?"

"I am afraid not," she answered despondingly.

"If Lord Beletrieve countenanced us," rejoined Mr. Tennant, "we might still stem this torrent of impertinence. I am surprised that he who boasts so much of his independence and originality of sentiment, should be influenced to desert us by the dishonourable jilting of a puppy, or the false reports originating in it. Aigline, you always appeared a favourite of his; can you not devise some plan to draw him back to visit here? Then you might explain about Lord Chanceley. I would not suppress a circumstance to spare the dastard who so richly deserves contempt."

"Lord Beletrieve never listens to explanations," replied Aigline mildly; "and besides, twice yesterday he rode by at the time I chanced to be standing at the window, and saluted him, but he did not deign to return the politeness; he affected not to see me."

"He appears too refined for intentional rudeness," remarked Mr. Tennant. "Aigline, your over vivacity sometimes renders you too *brusque*; it may be, however, unintentionally that you have offended his Lordship."

"Impossible, my dear father," she answered. Then turning to me, in an under tone said, "Freville, mark me, Lord Beletrieve has some scheme in wishing to overwhelm us with mortifications. Still, all my woman's wit, as papa terms it, cannot fathom his object."

"Aigline," called out Mr. Tennant, "his Lordship was a great admirer of this little enamelled painting of Jephtha's daughter, though very valuable, and I am loath to part with it, still, if you think he would receive it as a compliment, and call to return thanks, I would give you permission to send it to him."

She replied with vivacity, "Not for worlds, my dear father. In our graspings after fashion we have parted with sufficient treasure not to cast away such a beautiful gem. That, however, would not deter me so much as the triumph to his vanity after so wantonly injuring us; so do not think of it."

"What do you mean?" he answered angrily. "To what injury do you allude? Nay, do not look so distressed; you were thinking of that fool Chanceley. My dear child, you should have too much spirit to cast away a thought on such a passionless, vapid coxcomb."

She blushed with confusion at her own giddiness; then, to divert his thoughts from the subject, started up, exclaiming,

“I have just thought of a plan that may win back Lord Beletrieve; at all events, if it fail, though there is some flattery, there is no meanness in it. So saying, she approached the writing-table, and in a few moments returned with a note, elegantly written, and directed to Lord Beletrieve.

“You must read it to me,” said Mr. Tennant, with a smile. She obeyed.

“Miss Tennant’s compliments to Lord Beletrieve, having just received from Paris some music as yet not published in London, which she thinks will suit his Lordship’s taste, would feel gratified by his fixing a day to accompany her with his violoncello, and hopes he will excuse her making this request; but independent of the pleasure of his company, parts of the music are so difficult that she could not execute them without his assistance.”

“Shall I send it, papa?” she demanded.

“Certainly, my love, it may succeed, and can do no possible injury.” So saying, he quitted the apartment.

“Do not, Aigline,” I cried impetuously. “What possible advantage can you gain by the society of Lord Beletrieve, to compensate for thus paying

court to one, who as you justly remarked, so wantonly destroyed your prospects with Lord Chanceley, besides being the cause of the slights you have since received ? Then it is not treating your father well to keep him in ignorance and tempt him to entertain in hospitality one who acted an enemy's part. Really, Aigline, you are provokingly inconsistent. You say that you have a presentiment this man will draw evil on you ; and now that you have escaped his influence, you are trying to attract him back. I have no patience--"

"Nor I with you, Freville," she gaily interrupted ; "you are so ridiculously contradictory. Whenever I found fault with Lord Beletrieve, you were wont to quarrel with me, and now when I wish to conciliate him, you are in a downright passion. Certes, you men are very unreasonable."

"No, Aigline, the fault is yours. When I thought your dislike fanciful, I took his side of the question ; but his interference between you and Lord Chanceley proves to a demonstration that, in spite of his bland manner, he is as ill-natured and interfering as an old maid ; except, indeed, what I strongly suspect, that being desperately in love, he has resolved to propose, when, according to the opinion of the worthies of all ages, stratagems

are admissible. Besides, Aigline, when united to you, he becomes the arbiter of your destiny; thus you will not only be a lady bright, but an inspired prophetess."

"Never shall I be Lady Beletrieve," she hastily answered: "first, because his Lordship would not disarrange his bachelor habits by the introduction of a wife; next, powerful as I admit ambition, nature is still more unconquerable, and I absolutely loathe Lord Beletrieve."

"Come, come, Aigline, no affectation. You held Lord Chanceley in contempt, and still would have married him."

"Yes, Freville, but that sentiment is more easily conquered—subdued, I should say."

"Did not the Melanche, of whose death you told me, reside with Lord Beletrieve?" I demanded.

"Certainly, but the position of a wife is far different. He owed poor Melanche no duty, no respect. None of his self-consequence was to be supported by her. The moment he was weary of the connexion he could dissolve it; there was no tie to prevent him, and, as the event proved, no honour or feeling; but, thanks to England, her christianity and laws, a wife cannot be so treated, no, not by the greatest profligate."

"Then if you really have no design to lure his

Lordship on to a marriage, which certainly would ennoble you, let me ask, Aigline, where is the inducement to desire his society?"

"Fashion," she answered. "I see its corruption, I feel its insufficiency, but

Bigoted to this idol, we disclaim

Rest, health, and ease, for nothing but a name.

There is a poetical confession!" she continued, more gaily, "though really, Freville, you are not entitled to it, for there is a presumption and self-delusion in your playing the Mentor to me on the very point where your own good sense failed. Forget you how often I have condemned your devotion to Lord Beletrieve?"

"I avow my admiration," I answered, "and would, if possible, in some degree imitate the graces of his manner and address; but, Aigline, men and women are quite different. There was no danger to my peace or character by associating with him. Then, hitherto, he has acted so generously, not only trying to obtain my commission in the regiment I selected, but introducing and recommending me to the notice of the Commander-in-Chief, who has since honoured me with a salute. Accustomed as I have been from boyhood to the army, I can well appreciate this kindness."

"Freville," she replied, laying her hand on my

arm and looking archly in my face, "Mr. La Franck, your pedagogue, was wont to say that every woman found a ready excuse for her misdemeanours by proving that her neighbours committed greater. Now your observations testify that the ingenuity of self-defence more properly belongs to you lords of the creation. However, being resolved on this question to have my own way, I shall no further argue the point."

With these words, she hastily rang the bell. Guessing her purpose was to send the note, I tried to snatch it, but she sportively escaped from my grasp, and, ere I was aware of her intention, bounded out of the room, locking me in. There was no being angry with one so beautiful, so I quietly submitted to the imprisonment. In about an hour she released me, observing that, her note having been delivered, my interference was useless; and to restore my good humour, she proposed going to the music room. Though still assuming displeasure, I obeyed, and as she sat down to the piano, brought over the violoncello—which, by the way, was a remarkable fine instrument.

"Oh! no, Freville, have mercy, and bring your flute; for should Lord Beletrieve obey my request and come, how could I ever endure his scrape after your master-touch?"

"And yet," I exclaimed, indignantly, "in your note you complimented his knowledge of music. How can you stoop to such flattery?"

She replied: "The fault lies with your own sex, Freville, who never can be managed without it. I never saw one of you care for a guileless, simple-minded girl. What woman dares point out a man's faults until she is married to him? And then, oh! then he is not spared. However, let us commence this opera."

We had scarcely done so when the door was thrown open, and Lord Beletrieve was announced. We both started, and I whispered Aigline:

"Your flattery succeeded."

She smiled, and blushing deeply, advanced to meet his Lordship, who, in spite of his air of gallantry, looked ill and languid. Still his manner was both dignified and gentle, as he said:

"Miss Tennant, I felt so obliged by your note, that though I had promised to accompany the Prince to Windsor, I declined the honour to have the pleasure of answering it personally."

She expressed her gratitude. I then stepped forward and would have spoken, but affecting to be angry he waived me off, saying:

"Mr. Deerhurst, I am really offended. Ten days confined to my room, and for the last seven

you never even called to inquire after me. Is that the way you treat your friends?"

Awkwardly enough I stammered out my apologies, which were gracefully accepted; then his Lordship, in his happy manner, told all the *on dits* of the Court. While we were thus engaged, Mr. Tennant entered. Lord Beletrieve saluted him quite affectionately, saying:

"Mr. Tennant, as the only excuse for Mr. Deerhurst's neglect, I shall expect on Friday next (it was then Tuesday) that he will dine with me, to meet a few particular friends; perhaps you would be so obliging as to join us."

Much gratified, Mr. Tennant accepted the invitation. Then turning to Aigline he continued, in a sportive manner:

"Miss Tennant, I do not include you; but, lest you might be offended at the exclusion, will give a concert expressly for your amusement. And there, Mr. Tennant, except you can play the harp, I must forbid your entrance."

Mr. Tennant, who never saw through the finesse of throwing him off in a polite way, was explaining that he could play the violin tolerably well, when Lord Beletrieve carelessly said:

"Well, Mr. Tennant, you do not play the harp, so I am *not* to have the honour of your company

at my concert. However, Mr. Deerhurst, I shall expect you."

The dark eyes of Aigline flashed at the easy superiority of his manner, but, as she often observed, the manacles of folly were too powerful for her reason. A little after he said :

"I am quite exhausted, shall I ring for refreshments?"

"Certainly," said Aigline, and Mr. Tennant stepped out to order them.

"Not one song have we had as yet," said Lord Beletrieve, leading Aigline to the piano. As he arranged her music he observed, in a negligent manner, "Do you know, Miss Tennant, I had some idea of going to Devonshire for a short time to conquer my cold. Only fancy my being in the country for three months in quest of health, with no companion but Chanceley—for he was to have been my host. Don't you think, Aigline, that however salubrious the air, I must have fallen into a mental atrophy? Undoubtedly, Chanceley is the most insipid person I ever met."

She coloured violently, her fingers trembled on the keys, but she was too confused to speak.

Affecting not to notice her emotion, he proceeded :

"At present Chanceley is on the continent; no loss! At all events, I would not have invited him

to my concert : it is given expressly for you, Aigline, and I shall not admit a single bore—all shall be worthy of its fair inspiration.”

There was no resisting such flattery, she thanked him with animation.

“By the way, Aigline,” he observed, “how came it that Mr. Tennant’s last dinner was a failure ? These circumstances, however trivial they appear, have their influence. Beautiful as you are, Aigline, it would not do *just now* to have you out of fashion, so, positively, you must have a ball;—observe, it must be very exclusive, none but persons of the first fashion shall be admitted. To-morrow I will call to arrange the music for my concert : you, Aigline, shall be my *prima donna*, then we can conclude on the ball ; so prepare to be very industrious next week ; numberless lists, notes, and orders are to be written.” He rose to take leave.

“My Lord, will you not wait for the refreshments?”—at the moment they entered, and Mr. Tennant followed.

“Just a jelly, and a glass of Constantia,” he answered. Then to me, he said, “Mr. Deerhurst, should we not cite Miss Tennant for a witch ? In her presence, every thing is forgotten, even thirst and hunger ; and now, farewell.”

As Mr. Tennant opened the door for him, he

said, "I have advised your daughter to give a ball, it is quite indispensable; of course you will engage the first artists to make the necessary preparations. I expect that the ball will be one of the most select and brilliant of the season. I wish, Mr. Tennant, your dancing room was some twenty feet longer; however, on the whole, your house is admirably well fitted up. By the bye, Aigline," again advancing towards her, "to-morrow evening you must go to the Opera. My box, I regret to say, is engaged to some of my country friends,—a sad bore these same country friends! however, you can go with Lady Mainstoun."

Aigline again blushed deeply, and was stammering out an excuse, when interrupting her, he rejoined, "I know what you would say of her neglect, rudeness, and so forth; but you had better make a convenience of that trifling woman, who may be classed with the ephemerals of society. However, to soothe your Irish pride, she shall call on you, and as an *amende honorable* request your company as a favour. And observe, my dear little girl, to be perfectly elegant you must conquer this quick sense of injury, these fancied slights to your dignity, this trembling sensibility to the thousand mortifications to which all who would rise above their sphere are ever subject:

bah ! it is much ado about nothing.” With these words, accompanied by smiles and shrugs, he bowed his adieus, and hurried down stairs. This time he had the lameness in his left leg. Aigline touching my arm whispered :

“Freville, I tremble for your tendon achilles ; you positively must be lame for my ball.”

“What ball are you all talking of?” demanded Mr. Tennant staring.

“Papa, Lord Beletrieve insists upon my giving one ; he says there is no other method for my re-entering fashionable life.”

“I tell you,” said Mr. Tennant, “all these expenses would ruin a larger fortune than mine ; however, as Lord Beletrieve says it, of course it *must* be ; but, Aigline, remember, when—as your fashionables term it—the season ends, we quit London for ever.”

Aigline rejoined with vivacity, “Before the next opens, our very existence will be forgotten. And thus, Freville,” she added in an under tone, “we shall by oblivion escape the sneers and sarcasms of our London friends, the only meed of our folly and extravagance. Did you observe how his Lordship inadvertently let out, that he had watched all my movements ? How could he otherwise know of Lady Mainstoun’s put off about the Opera ; or that our dinner was a failure ? I tell

you, Freville, he is the guiding star of my destiny."

"And will lead you to the altar to swear, love, honour, and obey," I whispered in the same low tone.

"The two former," she answered, "are impossibilities; so adieu, for all this time my father is waiting."

* * * * *

Lord Beletrieve's dinner and concert went off exactly as he wished; the former without observation, the latter with great *éclat*, and was attended by the Prince and his royal brothers. It was for the time being the caprice of his Lordship, for he was too passionless to be guided by a stronger motive, to humour the Tennants. Thus, he invited a few men of science, who sought his patronage, to meet Mr. Tennant. Not one man of rank or fashion that day dined at his table, still, not amidst royalty had he ever acted the host more gracefully; and with a tact which few could acquire, he at once displayed his own information, which, however superficial, was imposing, and by his address drew forth that of Mr. Tennant, with whom he was so pleased, that I afterwards heard him observe,

"I wish this Tennant had formerly belonged to a higher grade in society; if so, I would have

classed him among my set, for he is one of the cleverest men I ever met, and quite vain enough for a Cosmopolite."

Such was his Lordship's qualified praise; but, indeed, it was usual whenever he spoke well of any person to conclude his remarks by some sarcasm.

Aigline's ball was the next event of interest. In spite of the agitation she suffered, lest her noble acquaintances should even at the last hour pour in apologies, and after all the splendid preparations and vast expence, lest her party should prove a failure, she looked exquisitely beautiful. Lord Beletrieve arrived early, as he expressed it, to review the apartments, and the supper, and the fair hostess. All met his approbation, and he stood near Aigline as she received her guests. This lessened my pleasure, for being less excited and engaged than either she or her father, I perceived that it awakened much observation, evinced by sneers and whispers. As Mr. Tennant afterwards observed, politeness was by no means practised by the Beletrieve clique. However, I reconciled my mind to the annoyance by the persuasion that she would be Lady Beletrieve. Ambition and vanity, I thought, were idols, and at their shrine she will sacrifice herself to a man she detests. However, it is but the exchange of

youth and beauty for rank and title, and is of daily occurrence.

The result of the ball exceeded Aigline's expectation. Her rooms had been crowded by rank and talent, and for the next month her table was covered with invitations; she was in the very zenith of her fashion. Justly imputing her success to Lord Beletrieve, she began to view him with more complacency, and exerted herself more than ever to please, making an excuse for him, in respect to Lord Chanceley, in the belief that, in spite of his prejudices, he really intended to propose for her. Had he done so, I have little doubt that she would have accepted of him, for she bore my quizzing on the subject with far better temper than formerly; and though she still declared the impossibility, the declaration was not accompanied by the same bitterness of sarcasm.

On his side, he paid her the most marked attention. Few days elapsed that he did not call at Mr. Tennant's, sometimes remaining for hours, at others, but for a few instants; and when he did not come, he usually sent fruit, flowers, music, or books. Mr. Tennant naturally remarked on all this, but I must do him the justice to say that, although launched into the vortex of fashion, he abhorred the very idea of Aigline's being married to Lord Beletrieve, satisfying himself by saying,

“Freville, though Lord Beletrieve must certainly propose for Aigline, she has too much sensibility and principle ever to unite herself to a man considerably older than her father, and of such libertine principles.”

Yet by some strange and inexcusable infatuation he took no steps to check the intimacy. Indeed, from the period of his unexpected wealth and Mrs. Tennant’s death, his whole conduct had been a tissue of folly. Good-natured and generous to enthusiasm, he was as unsuspicious and guileless as a child. Perfectly adoring Aigline, he humoured her in all her follies, and unreflectingly exposed her to every danger. Even his admitting me to be the inmate of his house, her sole and intimate companion, was a criminal neglect of his duty.

From this period, though I still continued a votary of the Beletrieve system, I no longer worshipped its great original. Independent of his treachery towards the Tennants, he did not improve on intimacy; and as I discovered that he entertained a jealousy of Aigline, and that his motive in exerting himself about my commission was to separate her from my society, I felt the less grateful. In addition to this, although the bland smile seldom quitted his rigid lips, and the mellowed tones of his voice were never raised in anger,

still, from the refinement of his taste, he was frequently annoyed by trifles ; and then, in despite of his courtly manners, became captious and sarcastic. Of this the following is an instance.

A day or two after the ball, he was sitting in the drawing-room with Aigline and me, for, at her request, I never left them to a *tête-à-tête*. Once or twice she proposed adjourning to the music-room, but he languidly declined, saying he preferred conversation. Consequently, she exerted all her powers to amuse ; he appeared pleased, when the loud knock of a footman was heard—another, and still another succeeded.

“I can endure this no longer,” he exclaimed, rising, “it shatters my nerves. Is it not provoking that the peace of a family, nay, of a whole street, is to be disturbed by this vulgar unmeaning custom ? It has not even antiquity to recommend it, for the sound of a horn at a noble’s gate, softened by distance, and the thick walls of a castle fell musically on the ear ; but here in these shells, which we now call houses, up rolls a carriage, down jumps a footman, and then by the aid of a bronzed knocker strikes up a noise that might rouse deaf Lord Wonsley from his slumber. By Heaven, I wish that all who did so had their own brains knocked out !”

He looked fearfully pale and wicked as he spoke,

but, instantly recollecting himself, with his usual mildness, said :—

“Miss Tennant, forgive this coarse expression ; I should have been more guarded in your presence.”

Not a little surprised at his violence, to soothe him she answered :—

“I do not wonder at your Lordship’s displeasure, even my father has often termed it a most injudicious custom. I cannot imagine in what it first originated ; surely a porter would as readily attend to a gentle knock or ring ?”

“Strange enough ! Aigline, the Prince put the same question to me about three or four years ago. He was sitting in my boudoir with Lord Portland and General Sir John Irvine,—the latter allowed to be one of the most finished gentlemen in Europe. We were engaged secretly discussing a political question of the deepest interest, when knock after knock resounded from my door. ‘This noisy interruption is intolerable,’ exclaimed his Royal Highness, with a heat of temper he seldom displayed :—‘Lord Beletrieve, how can a person of your refinement suffer it, and in what folly could such a barbarism have originated ?’ I expressed my ignorance, and, to mark my disapprobation, rang the bell, and ordered my porter

to have the knocker instantly removed. ‘Your Royal Highness,’ said Sir John Irvine, smiling, ‘there is a legend attached to the custom, but I cannot vouch for its veracity. Some hundred years ago, ages it may be, for the date is not accurate, a blacksmith realized a large fortune ; so he purchased a fine carriage and fine horses, and with his golden wand turned his Cyclopes into footmen, and wooed and won a noble lady for his wife. Now, what availed all this, if his neighbours, who had so often heard the merry sound of his anvil, did not witness his grandeur? Day after day he dashed up and down Ludgate Hill, where he had formerly resided. Alas, for the malice of this world ! His neighbours, envious of his prosperity, resolved not to see what they were grieved to know ; so whenever the fine equipage, with its fine horses and fine lady drove by, they all ran from their doors and windows. Thus by lessening Smithy’s triumph, they excited his anger, and he swore a big oath, for gold had not refined his manners, that his friends and acquaintance should both see and hear his carriage. With that he called for his coachman and tall footman, and ordered the coachman to stop at the door of every person of whom he, Smithy, could claim any knowledge, and the footman to descend, and give a thundering knock. Ac-

customed to the lusty strokes of the anvil, and as proud as their master of his new chariot, the liveried Cyclopes obeyed. Soon, there was not a person on Ludgate Hill who did not hear and dread the approach of Smithy's equipage. But now, your Royal Highness, in referring to the injury to the peace of society, I come to the saddest part of my legend. The great mass of the people being essentially vulgar, love show and noise. Thus Smithy's example was soon followed on Ludgate Hill; thence it spread to the City, and, strange to say! gradually extended to the West end; and, oh! horror of horrors, the nuisance has become so prevalent that, here, on this day, nay this very hour, within the hallowed sanctuary of Lord Beletrieve's boudoir, your Royal Highness's secret conference has been disturbed. Truly there is something noisy in the state of London!"

"This sally of Sir John Irvine," continued Lord Beletrieve, "which in the repetition seems dull enough, was given with so much humour and dramatic effect as to amuse the Prince. His anger was diverted, and we spent our morning agreeably."

Just as Lord Beletrieve finished speaking, came another succession of knocks; his smile continued, but his pallid brow darkened.

“My Lord,” said Aigline gently, “would you approve of my ordering our porter to remove the knocker?”

Out of temper all the morning, for an instant his self-command was lost, and he cast on her a look of ineffable scorn, which rendered him perfectly hideous—it merely crossed his countenance and vanished—but, as Aigline afterwards remarked, it was a peep at the cloven foot and could never be forgotten. Recovering himself he rose, saying:—

“Miss Tennant, will you allow me to ring for my carriage?”

Abashed by his haughtiness, she stammered out, “Freville, will you be so obliging as to call for it?”

Lord Beletrieve’s quick eye observed her vexation; every circumstance which proved his power, gratified him; his complacency was restored, and as he rose to depart, he took her hand;—as he did so I saw her cheek pale—and in his usual bland manner he said:

“Apropos, I have not answered your question relative to the knocker; my dear little girl, observe, and let not the observation offend—that to attempt any innovation on the established customs of society, be they ever so absurd, nay corrupt or destructive, requires a certain station and influence such as your father, however respectable, does not

at present possess ; so let your knocker remain on, and I shall take care not to call again upon a day you expect company."

Mortified at the covert insolence of his speech, Aigline drew away her hand, while her eyes flashed and her cheeks glared with indignation. Looking at her with undisguised admiration, he said :

"Mr. Deerhurst, she is positively in a passion ; but we must excuse the fair daughter of Erin, for such beauty as hers is privileged," and with a low bow he retired.

"I positively hate that man," said Aigline, as she heard the door close after him, "so insulting is his pride, a pride founded on corruption, on the adoption of every ignoble and selfish sentiment, on the indulgence of every low gratification. His obtuse mind despises all the discoveries of science, and mocks at the revelations of Christianity ; yet both were necessary to the gratification and security of his luxurious existence. To such men France owed her revolution. Freville, you say I am a prophet, hear then my belief : if the Cosmopolite influence increase, by lessening all respect for law and religion, it will sap the very foundation of England's constitution ; and the bloody scenes of France will be enacted in this now happy land."

CHAPTER X.

ON the following week I was gazetted for my ensigncy in the — Light Infantry, and, to add to my pleasure I received a letter of congratulation from Clara, including an invitation from Mr. Arnheim to spend a month or two at the Parsonage, before I joined my regiment.

* * * * *

“I can scarcely wish you joy on an event which causes me so much regret,” said Aigline, sadly. “Freville, you have been to me as a brother, and now when you are gone I shall stand alone in this peopled solitude.”

I tried to quiz her respecting Lord Beletrieve, but she grew excessively angry: to change the subject I spoke of the propriety of calling to acquaint his Lordship with my promotion, and to thank him for his attention to my interest. Both she and her father advised me to do so; accord-

ingly on the following morning I proceeded to his residence.

It was about mid-day—I was ushered into his boudoir, that temple of luxury. He was reclining on his silken couch ; he received me with stately politeness, but with a look of inquiry, which seemed to say—presumptuous fellow, what brings him here? I felt confused, and answering to his countenance, rather than address, said, “ My Lord ! after the lively interest you have so frequently expressed about the event, I took the liberty of calling to acquaint you with the news, that—”

“ Ha !” he exclaimed with vivacity, “ from your excitement, Mr. Deerhurst, something extraordinary must have occurred. I know the Prince was ill ; good heaven ! can he be dead—or, perhaps, Bonaparte is taken—or it may be, the Russians have declared war against England ; but no ! I have it now : the Parliament have at length resolved on appointing his Royal Highness to the regency, and you, Mr. Deerhurst, aware of the lively interest I have taken in this subject—indeed, in every thing connected with his Royal Highness, have kindly waived all ceremony and have come at this early hour to be the first to communicate it ;—and yet,” he continued, yawning, “ it seems strange that you, Mr. Deerhurst,

should be the first to acquaint me. I had expected that compliment from the Prince."

No words can express my embarrassment; I was quite at a loss to determine whether he had really mistaken, or was merely gratifying his captious temper by sarcasm. However, although he had resumed his recumbent position, as his eyes were fixed steadily on mine, I felt the necessity of a reply: so plucking up my courage, or rather impudence; I said, "My Lord, the intelligence to which I alluded, to me is of a deeper interest;—I have been gazetted for my ensigncy." He sneered, shrugged his shoulders, and in his monotonous tone said:

"This then is the mighty news. Freville Deerhurst, gentleman, is promoted to a pair of colours in the British army!"

Well might I be agitated; though the joke was rather against me, I could not but see how absurd it was to display my excitement before his Lordship, or expect that he could be interested, so I answered gaily, "Yes; my Lord, a step necessary to the taking of Bonaparte:—I expect to have that honour." This good-humoured reply to his peevish manner, pleased his fickle humour.

"You are better tempered," he said, raising himself on his elbow, "than your beautiful cousin, Aigline; however, I like her all the better

for being ardent ; and now, Mr. Deerhurst, let me ask, was it not ridiculous to expect that I was to be rejoiced at your promotion ? However, I must not be too severe ; all young men, when they enter the army, and all young misses when they enter the holy bonds of matrimony, are so elated that they fancy themselves of sufficient consequence to interest society in general : the delusion seldom lasts. The roaring of cannon or of children is a stimulus that rouses them to realities ; and they find the only importance attached to their new position, consists in the additional duties with which they have encumbered themselves."

Being at a loss to determine whether his Lordship expected me to laugh, or to look wise at this speech, I made no direct reply ; but, bowing as gracefully as I could, said, "I shall no longer trespass on your Lordship's time—it is probable I may not again have the honour of seeing you ; but, though you will not allow me to express my gratitude, I shall not forget your kindness." I was going, but he called me back, saying :

"How can you support your separation from Miss Tennant ?"

Wishing to remove all jealousy, I replied, "I shall certainly regret the loss of her and her father's society. I class them among my dearest friends ; but, my

Lord, I am going to the house of the only girl I ever did, ever can love, and this pleasure lessens the sorrow of parting." He looked pleased, and in a tone of gallantry said :

"At some future period I shall hope to see your paragon. Do you know," he added, with a natural sigh, "Lord Beletrieve almost envies ensign Deerhurst his fresh youth and passionate feelings?" He then bade me farewell.

My pleasure at the prospect of a military career increased, by finding that my old friend and school-fellow, Charles Mellish, was in the — light infantry.

On the morning of my departure, Aigline seemed much affected, but playfully said :

"Freville, in a few weeks you will return to bid us a last adieu ;—and then, the Tennants will be obliterated from the gay soldier's mind."

I chided her for the thought ; sincerely thanked Mr. Tennant for his hospitality, and hurried off to disguise regrets which could only tend to increase her emotion.

CHAPTER XI.

IN after life, I have often tried to bring back to memory, what "manner of man" I was at the period I quitted Mr. Tennant's splendid residence and fashionable acquaintance to proceed to the peaceful Parsonage. If I have previously dwelt upon my personal advantages and musical talents, it is, because at the period I valued them beyond more solid attainments. I was perfect master of the French and German languages; a good draughtsman, and well acquainted with military tactics; but of the higher pursuits of literature my knowledge was very superficial. On all religious subjects my principles were unfixed; unhappily, from a few perverse circumstances, I had adopted the mistaken idea that in general its professors were either enthusiasts or hypocrites;—a chivalrous idea of honour I nourished, almost to a romantic degree. My passions were violent, but I

was not constitutionally dissipated, and had a perfect abhorrence of intemperance.

I did not reach the Parsonage until the fourth evening after I had left London; as I approached it, my memory turned on the rapturous thought of again meeting Clara. One circumstance alone checked that pleasure. In her letter of invitation, she had mentioned that a Mr. Hilton, who acted as Curate, resided with them; and independent of an incipient jealousy, I felt displeased that our intercourse should be interrupted by a stranger's presence. On reaching the gate that opened on the parterre, I alighted, and walking up the well-known spot, stopped at a glass door that opened into the reception room.

Mr. Arnheim sat reclining back in his antique chair; the evening light falling on his face, threw it out in full relief, and I started as I discovered its ghastly expression. Leaning over him like a ministering spirit, was Clara, the fulness of her youth and beauty contrasting strongly with the sad old man's faded strength. While with passionate admiration I gazed on her, I perceived by her directing some coffee into his hand that his sight was quite gone. Affected at what I saw, a sigh escaped me. Clara sprung forward, exclaiming,

“It is Freville!”

Affectionately embracing me, she led me forward to Mr. Arnheim, who expressed pleasure at my arrival, and strove to cheer me by measuring my height with his hands, and feeling my beard and whiskers ; but my heart was oppressed by witnessing the change in his appearance. However, I experienced satisfaction on learning that Mr. Hilton was an old man with a large family, and, for the time, was staying at Plinlimmon Castle with a Mr. Aylsbury.

The latter gentleman was a fellow of Christ-Church, and distinguished no less for his abilities than the stern piety of his life, the more remarkable as he had yet hardly reached the prime of manhood. He was the valued friend of Lord Plinlimmon, and through that means he became acquainted with the Arnheims, and, as will appear in the sequel, was regarded at the Parsonage with feelings of affection and esteem, in which, however, I at first by no means participated.

Again established at Cader Idris, though I could not be indifferent to Mr. Arnheim's rapid decline, my days passed rapturously. His intellect was beginning to waver, and he became restless and nervous, except when in the open air. Mounted on his old pony, with Clara and me walking by his side, he would ride through all those scenes his darkened vision could no longer

distinguish, but on which his memory still loved to dwell. And oh! how far dearer to me were these moonlight scenes and wanderings, than the pomp, and glare, and flashing of artificial life. How frequently have I returned from the crowded saloons of fashion without a wish to return to them, except what might spring from lassitude or habit. Whereas, in the days of my brightest enjoyments, amidst the classic scenes of Italy, the romantic forests of Germany, or the luxuriant East, there was not a pride or pleasure I would not have gladly forfeited to be again at Cader Idris, with Clara for my companion.

Mr. Arnheim's illness increased; and he became solely confined to his apartment. Mine was required for the physician, who was obliged to sleep in the house. Consequently, at Clara's request, communicated to me by Mrs. Waller, a person who from having been nursery governess at the Parsonage then acted as its housekeeper, I took up my abode with Mr. Alysbury. This was most unfortunate, for I experienced a mad jealousy at the preference I fancied Clara showed to him, and in our constant *têtes-à-tête*, for Mr. Hilton was seldom with us, I indulged my irritable feelings by upholding Lord Beletrieve and the Cosmopolite doctrines which were abhorrent to his pure and manly principles. At first he strove to argue the

point, but, with boyish petulance, though I could not controvert his reasoning, I supported Lord Beletrieve's false, immoral principles, merely with the view of annoying him. One evening, he rose from the table, and sternly said,

"Mr. Deerhurst, I am shocked to find that you entertain such ideas. As a clergyman, I am not justified in listening to boasted immorality; may I request that in future you will not press this subject."

After this rebuke, he seldom remained in the room with me, except when other company was present. This not only mortified, but grieved me, for I felt that I was in the wrong, yet was too haughty to make any apology.

Another week, and Mr. Arnheim was released from his suffering, and in all directions I heard of Clara's affliction, which was tempered, however, by submission to the will of Providence. The physician departed, and on the following day I remarked to Mr. Aylsbury, at breakfast.

"I conclude I may now return to the Parsonage, and no longer trespass on your hospitality."

He laid down his paper with a look of surprise, and said,

"Mr. Deerhurst," do you forget that at present it belongs to Mr. Hilton, who, as soon as

the last respects are paid to the deceased, will be inducted into the living ? And now, if you permit me, I shall acquaint you with the arrangements made by poor Arnheim, previously to your arrival ; and if any of them are hostile to your feelings, let me entreat of you to suppress your expression of anger, for I cannot, Mr. Deerhurst, always submit to them patiently."

I knitted my brow, and then, in a subdued voice, said,

"I regret, Mr. Aylsbury, that you should consider this caution necessary."

He bowed coldly, saying, "You are aware that at one period, Mr. Arnheim did not approve of your coming hither from London. I was with him at the time, and he confided his sentiments to me. He apprehended that an attachment might be formed between you and Clara, which, from many causes, he considered would be imprudent. He entertained a great prejudice, if it be one, to such near relatives marrying. He dreaded Clara's living in the army, which he knew must be your profession, and his mind dwelt on all the misery to which your mother, Mrs. Deerhurst, had been exposed. Then he considered you both too poor, for he placed little hopes in Sir Roger's wealth."

Mr. Aylsbury paused for a reply, but I was too much agitated to speak. Clara must love me,

else why her father's fears, I thought; and the idea was so rapturous that I could not dwell on the barriers which separated us.

Mr. Aylsbury continued, "You must remember, Mr. Deerhurst, that the observations I am now making are not my own; and, as far as I can recollect, I shall repeat the words of our departed friend. 'Freville,' he said, 'is a fine spirited youth, and, had his education been attended to, I have no doubt that he would have proved a superior person; but it has been cruelly neglected. Of this, however, I shall not speak, as it casts a reflection on his father. As it is, he is romantic, generous, and a great favourite of mine, but by no means the person to whom I would entrust Clara's happiness. Brought up in retirement, in domestic love, and strong religious faith, and possessed of the finest sensibilities, she will place all her best affections in her husband, and should he prove unworthy, she will be miserable, more particularly if his religious sentiments accord not with her own. And on sacred subjects I much fear Freville thinks too lightly; however, this may be but fancy, or the result of an over anxiety about my beloved child. I feel, Mr. Aylsbury, I have not long to live, and as I would by no means speak on the subject to Clara, who I well know would respect my lightest

wish, I have pressed it on your notice. Should Freville and Clara become sincerely attached, after she attains the age of one-and-twenty, if in other respects circumstances admitted of their union, I would not that my voice rose from the grave to interfere with their happiness. But when I am gone you will be her guardian, and should you think him unworthy, in the name of that God whose minister you are, I entreat of you to respect my sentiments, and to tell her as she respects my memory not to unite herself to Freville Deerhurst."

Again Mr. Aylsbury paused. In a tone choked with passion I exclaimed,

"Mr. Aylsbury, do you mean to interfere between me and my cousin?"

"That," he coldly replied, "shall depend upon circumstances. As this evening Mr. Arnheim's testament is to be read, you shall then perceive that I am invested with full power over Clara till she is of age, and I think she wants nearly two years of that period."

"And were she of age, and I independent, would you give your consent to our union?" I vehemently demanded.

He sternly replied:—"Never while you boast of being the imitator of Lord Beletrieve, the supporter of the Cosmopolite system, originating as

it did in the fatal scepticism which was the source of the French revolution, shall I ever consent to intrust so precious a charge to your care?"

I answered furiously:—"Mr. Aylsbury, I am not deceived; there could be but one motive why Mr. Arnheim consigned his daughter to the care of so young a man as you are."

"The cause," he replied, sternly, "rose from the want of a nearer friend, and this, till his reason faded, caused the old man much regret."

"Did Lady Plinlimnon then refuse the charge?" I demanded, petulantly.

"Mr. Deerhurst, it is right that so near a relative as you should be satisfied on the subject. Lord Plinlimmon's eldest son, who is very wild, at present resides with his family; and, much as his Lordship admires Clara, he would not consider her a match for his heir, and he believes it impossible that his son should be in the house with her and not be captivated; on this account he considered it his duty not to expose either to the temptation. At present Miss Arnheim is to be placed under the care of my step-mother, the Dowager Lady Aylsbury, and in a year, or thereabouts, I hope to have a home to offer that will in every respect suit her taste,

where nothing that can constitute her happiness shall be neglected."

I struck my forehead with agony, and uttered a deep groan.

"Then you really love Clara?" he said, in a mild tone.

"To distraction," I exclaimed, "beyond all the earth, nay,—beyond my soul's salvation!"

He shuddered, and was going to reply, when Mr. Hilton entered, and, although I afterwards made several attempts to renew the subject of my love, he always evaded it.

In his will, Mr. Arnheim bequeathed to me a legacy of one hundred pounds, his watch, and a valuable ring. I was much affected by this proof of his regard; I wished to decline the money, as all he had to leave Clara only amounted to eight hundred pounds; but she insisted on my acceptance with an energy that set denial at defiance. This, however, did not occur till several days after the opening of the testament, at which she did not attend.

Preparations were being made for her departure, which was fixed for the 22nd of October. Mr. Aylsbury and Mrs. Waller were to accompany her to Bath, where Lady Aylsbury resided. By letters I received, I understood that the — Light Infantry were under orders to be in

readiness to join the service companies then in Malta. Thus in a few days I should be separated from Clara, perhaps, for ever! and even during that short interval I had no opportunity of speaking to her, for Mrs. Waller had positively refused my entreaties to let me see her, nay, even to bear any messages, excusing herself by saying, "Indeed, Mr. Deerhurst, it is cruel in you from any selfish motives to wish to aggravate Miss Arnheim's deep affliction for her father, and her regret at leaving the Parsonage, the happy home which she is now quitting to live among total strangers, for even I am not to continue with her at Lady Aylsbury's, but return to a situation Mr. Aylsbury has given me in the castle."

Still I hovered about the house, and in my frenzy—for my passions almost amounted to madness—would have forced myself into her presence; but Mr. Hilton and Mr. Aylsbury were eternally at the Parsonage, making arrangements about papers, furniture, stock, &c. All these, in the excited state of my mind, appeared such trifles, that I felt a contempt for those who could devote their time, or take any interest in them. It grieved me, too, to see Mr. Hilton occupy the antique velvet chair, once so exclusively Mr. Arnheim's, and sit at his desk, and take quiet and unconcerned possession of all the household gods

of the Parsonage, so associated in my memory with the departed, and which in my enthusiasm I considered as nearly sacred. But when on Sunday I saw him mount the old pony, and ride to church, I felt an impulse to rush forward and drag him off.

Unable to assume any composure, I no longer attended Mr. Aylsbury's hours, but continued wandering through every scene which I had visited with Clara. The result of such constant excitement was a slow fever; I grew fearfully thin and haggard, could find no rest, and my appetite was gone. At this period I must do Mr. Aylsbury the justice to say, that nothing could exceed his kindness. Whenever I chose to return to the castle I found a dinner in readiness, and every attention was paid to me; and frequently he entered into my apartment, and strove to win me into conversation. But, oppressed with the idea of his being engaged to Clara, I either preserved a sullen silence, or gave abrupt unmeaning answers.

It was the 19th of October, I sat at the breakfast-table with Mr. Aylsbury, for I felt too weak and languid to pursue my wanderings. Neither spoke; and to avoid conversation we affected to be engaged reading the papers, when a servant entered with a note — it was from Clara, saying: — “Dear Freville, I purpose dining below stairs

to-morrow for the first time since we last met, let me then hope for the pleasure of your company. You shall find me composed, and I know that, for my sake, you will be cheerful at this, probably our last, meeting in the dear Parsonage. Waller says you were very solicitous to see me. I regret she did not acquaint me of this before, as it would have afforded me pleasure; for now, Freville, you are my nearest, I may say, my only relative."

This short note filled me with rapture: I was again to see Clara, and that at her own request; it was owing to the interference of others we had been so long separated; and she had recognised me as her nearest relative! I was hurrying away to write my answer, when Mr. Aylsbury said, "Mr. Deerpurst, I conclude that note is from Mr. Hilton, to invite you to dinner on Thursday. I have just received an invitation."

"Not from Mr. Hilton," I answered, coldly, "but from Clara."

"Ha! that is right," he replied, with vivacity, "in all things she has good taste, under any circumstances she considers the feelings of others. She guessed it would afflict you to dine at the Parsonage as the guest of another; nor do I wonder, as even to myself, a comparative stranger, it is a severe trial."

The dinner hour was four; in the hope of seeing Clara I went to the Parsonage at three; but was disappointed, for she did not enter the drawing-room until a few minutes before dinner was announced, and then Mr. Aylsbury and Mr. Hilton were there on her entrance. The latter merely bowed, and continued to read a pamphlet. Mr. Aylsbury rose, and, handing a chair, said carelessly: "I hope, Miss Arnheim, you will not consider this fire too large, but the evenings are growing cold." She smiled, without speaking; when, springing forward, I caught her hand, with an exclamation of sorrow. She attempted to answer, but her lips quivered, the blood rushed to her face for a moment, dyeing her pale complexion with the brightest hue. Mr. Aylsbury, darting at me a look of displeasure, drew her arm under his to lead her to the dining-room. This simple action aroused my jealousy; I fancied that I saw him press her hand, and that her blue eyes—those eyes I so passionately loved—beamed on him a look of unutterable gratitude. My temper rose to fury; and, forgetting her just sorrow, I only thought of my own selfish feelings.

From the time of her mother's death, Clara, though then a child, sat at the head of her father's table, and there Mr. Aylsbury now placed her; but alas! the old man's place at the foot was vacant, for all dreaded to agitate her by filling it;

we felt that it rendered his absence more observable; she grew suddenly pale, but struggling to conquer her emotion, forced a smile, and then asked Mr. Hilton, would he take some fish. He hemmed, and though not much given to wine, drank off a bumper. The next moment she uttered a deep sigh, and would have fallen, had not Mr. Aylsbury, who anxiously watched, started up, and supporting her fainting form in his arms, borne her out of the room. I would have rushed after, but turning towards me, in a commanding voice, he said :

“Mr. Deerhurst, she must not be agitated; I merely go to consign her to the care of Waller, and will return presently.”

My feelings of disappointment and jealousy were so poignant, that I perfectly hated him, and as I returned to my seat, breathed a curse against his officiousness.

Mr. Aylsbury returned, and proposed walking down to the village; Mr. Hilton started up to join him. In a decided voice, I said :

“I shall remain till Miss Arnheim awakes. I have much to say, and may not again, at least for some time, have an opportunity.”

Mr. Hilton stared with his great grey eyes through his spectacles, as if surprised at my pre-

sumption; but Mr. Aylsbury, in a mild tone, remarked :

“Mr. Deerhurst, do not, I entreat, awaken Clara; I engage that your conversation shall not be interrupted,” so saying, he quitted the house, accompanied by Mr. Hilton.

For some time I strolled through the *parterre*; but my impatience could not be curbed, so I entered the drawing-room, and approached the couch where Clara slept. Her deep mourning robe contrasted beautifully with her glossy hair, but rendered her complexion too pale; and as she lay there in perfect repose, but for her long dark lashes and brows, she might have been taken for a statue. It were a vain attempt to account for our impulses, but I do believe, at least from my own experience, that when the mind is excited by any violent passion, more particularly of grief or love, that it has a predisposition to superstition: as I now gazed on that pale form of feminine loveliness, an idea flashed on my soul, that she would not long survive! Yielding to it, I fell on my knees, with a sentiment of perfect idolatry; and, in spite of my effort to control my emotion, a sigh burst forth; it awoke her. For an instant she looked around, then, rising gently, said:

“Oh! Freville, I am so glad it is only you.”

“Lie down again, Clara, and rest,” I exclaimed, in a husky voice, “and I will watch by you as I was wont to do in the days of our childhood. Oh! Clara, even then, when instinct alone guided me, my greatest bliss was to sit by your cradle, and rock it; and those dear friends, now departed, smiled to see and encourage our infant love; and now that we are thrown, as I may say, alone on this heartless world, should we not console and support each other?”

“Most certainly, Freville, as far as circumstances admit; but why agitate yourself?—what is your sorrow to mine? Yet I try to command it;” as she spoke she leant her head against my shoulder, and wept bitterly; then, raising herself, continued: “How grateful I ought to be towards you all, for being so indulgent and considerate. I thought to have shown more strength of mind; but oh! it is so hard to forget those we loved!” and again she wept, adding, “the sitting up so many nights, and want of appetite, have shaken my nerves; but have patience with me for a few days, and I shall be again myself.”

“Lean your head against my shoulder once more, dear Clara,” I cried. “Oh! that you would take me to be your safe-guard and support through all the trials of life!”

From agitation my speech was inarticulate. I

do not think that she comprehended me, for clasping her hands together, she exclaimed:

“No—no; nothing can ever compensate me for the loss of my father—my kind, indulgent father!—for years my companion—my friend—my guide! And now we are, in this world, separated for ever!” and she gave vent to a burst of passionate sorrow.

Shocked at a vehemence so unlike her usual gentleness, and which convulsed her whole frame, I sat beside her, and soothingly spoke of his broken health, loss of vision, and the still sadder fact that his intellects were fading,—representing what a burthen he must have become.

“Speak not in that way, Freville,” she interrupted, “say that he has been translated to Heaven, and then, through the inspiration of religion, I shall find comfort; but talk not of his being a burthen to me, for much as I mourned over his debilitated frame, a thousand times would I rather have him here, than lying in his cold grave. In this very room, even since he lost his sight, how many cheerful evenings have we not spent together!—but now, sight, hearing, speech, knowledge, all are gone! Oh, my God! teach me to support this bitter sorrow, and not to murmur at thy will!” and flinging herself on her knees, she buried her face in the pillow.

I did not venture to interrupt her; in about ten minutes she arose, looking greatly exhausted. I sat down on the couch beside her; in a languid voice she said:

“Freville, from our intimate friendship, I can indulge my feelings unrestrained before you, and it affords relief. Waller, though so kind, still acts the governess, and would chide away my sorrow; before Mr. Aylsbury’s superior intellect, I blush to betray the weakness of my soul; and Mr. Hilton, though meaning well, seems to consider that in offering me an asylum here, he wipes off all tears. Alas! that the Parsonage should pass into the hands of the stranger, and I its best beloved, be but a dependant in the house so long my own! Freville, I do not think the heart of man can fully comprehend the desolation of a woman when deprived of a father’s or husband’s support—I speak not this in repining, or in disbelief of human virtue,—far from it; I know that I possess many sincere and amiable friends, ready to receive and console me; but they shall not be my anchor. In this solemn season I recollect my father’s advice, often impressed on my mind, to seek my hope in heaven.”

She continued to converse in this manner for some time. Her sentiments I could not but approve, though burning with impatience to speak

of my own mad passion; at length finding an opportunity, I commenced by saying, "I know you are, for the present, going to reside with Lady Aylsbury :—have you ever seen her?"

"Yes! I knew her intimately, when I was in Bath; she is a relation of Lady Plinlimmon's, and her Ladyship wrote to her, to pay my poor father and myself every attention."

"And, Clara, is she a person you like, and with whom you expect to be happy?"

"I will not deceive you, Freville, she is not. Lady Aylsbury is one of the hundred dowagers to be met with in Bath, or, as I am told, in every great town—you know my own experience is very limited. She is respectable, from possessing a good fortune, a high position, and from having never outraged morals; but is a person of common-place habits and manners. In consequence of my poor father having refused to let me accompany him to London, where he went to the oculist, who was to perform an operation on his eyes, I spent the month of his absence with Lady Aylsbury, and thus had an opportunity of forming an estimate of her character, which differs from that of any person I had before known. She is so totally devoid of sensibility, that she positively doubts its existence in others, and imputes its expression either to weakness or

affectation. Devoted to going out, which she terms pleasure—though my heart was actually breaking with thinking of my beloved parent's sufferings and danger, she insisted on my accompanying her to parties—for she devotes every evening to cards ;—and when I timidly ventured to say, ‘Lady Aylsbury, in the present state of my spirits, I am unequal to society, and under any circumstances would prefer retirement,’ she would answer:—‘Nonsense ! nonsense !—in the first place what have you to grieve at ? Is it the illness of a half-blind old man, who, if he lives, will be a burthen to you and to himself ? His living may indeed be a loss, for two or three hundred a year is better than nothing ; but then if you cheer up, and dress well, while with me you have an opportunity of making conquests.—I never saw a girl more likely to marry well, for all that romance and nonsense, like yours, goes down with men.’ Then when wounded by her harshness, the tears rushed to my eyes, she would add, ‘Well, well, you are offended at my candour ; but I assure you, Miss Arnheim, all your sighs and fine sentiments are out of fashion ! and so they ought to be, for every one must die, and if the living go on grieving for the dead, there will be no end to trouble. I can answer for myself : though I lost my husband and two children, no one ever saw me shed a tear.’ Freville, if such are Lady

Aylsbury's views of my most natural sorrow, think of her contempt if she could penetrate my regret after the Parsonage, the village, Cader Idris, and all these scenes of my youth? Why, she would consider me demented."

"And is it possible, Clara, that you can reconcile your mind to live with such a heartless being?"

"Alas!" she replied sadly, "I have no alternative: her inviting me under my present emergency is a generous act, for which I shall ever be grateful. If she had not invited me, I am at a loss to know what would have been my fate. Like my departed mother, I might have been cast on the world."

"Oh!" I exclaimed, sinking on my knees before her, "consent to unite your fate to mine. Supported by the blessed hope, there is no difficulty I could not surmount!—Nay, listen," I exclaimed, as she would have spoken, "I only demand a promise, an engagement, not to be performed till Sir Roger Deerhurst's death; not even then if I am not independent. Clara, I would perish by the most painful death to serve you; but would not for my soul's weal injure you, my friend, my beloved, my adored!"

"You grieve and offend me by this address," she answered coldly, and rose to depart.

Rendered frantic by her calmness, I grasped

her hand, vehemently exclaiming, "You that are so good, so pious, pause ere you refuse. Remember, I warn you : my fate, nay, my immortal soul is in your keeping, Clara. A word from you may save or condemn me—say you will be mine, and mould my future conduct, nay, my thoughts to your wishes."

"Rise," she answered in a stern tone, and looking displeased. "I know not what effect this violence might have on others; but, Freville, it lessens my love, and destroys my confidence."

I was too much agitated to speak, but I struck my head with violence, and would have fled; gently detaining me, in soft accents she cried :

"Forgive me, if I have been too severe; but loving you as an only brother, a declaration of passion sent a shudder through my soul. Oh! Freville, waive the subject for ever, and be my friend."

I turned away my head, and she continued :

"Freville, my present glorious hope is the high mark of heaven, the rigid fingers of death have impressed on my heart the fleetness and uncertainty of human happiness. Pray to God to strengthen me in these holy thoughts: for mark me, Freville, my sojourn on earth will not be long;" saying these words she rushed from the apartment.

Next morning I learned Clara was so ill as to require a physician, who pronounced that she was threatened with brain fever, the result of over excitement.

Any description of my despair, as I reflected that I was the cause, and admitted the probability of her death, must fall short of my sufferings. Recollecting her regret at the declaration of my passion, in my distraction I stooped to a subterfuge. Oh heaven! could I have then foreseen the future evil to which my deviation from the truth was to lead, sooner would I have submitted to the most painful death; but impulse, not principle, has ever been my guide. While my heart throbbed to bursting, while drops of agony rolled down my forehead, and my hand trembled till I could scarcely direct my pen, in words as calm as they were false I addressed her with a solemn assurance that I entertained towards her no warmer sentiment, but that of an affectionate brother; nay, to give a colour to the damning lie, insinuated that my heart was devoted to Aigline Tennant; but, that I would willingly have sacrificed my own views to save her, the child of him to whom I owed so much from infancy. The pure soul of Clara, incapable of hypocrisy, doubted not my word.

A week passed and I received no answer; but

though Mr. Aylsbury and I scarcely spoke, pitying my anguish, he hourly sent me word of her progress, till all danger was past. In this state I was to join my corps the following week. They were under orders for immediate embarkation. So, again, I wrote to Clara, entreating her to grant me a last interview, and the words of this letter too were calm. But who can sound the depths of the human heart? Well, she could not write from very weakness, but she sent Waller to desire that I would spend the following evening with her, and as Waller had known me from infancy, and enjoyed Clara's confidence, I began reiterating to her the insinuation of my love for Aigline.

It was on a Sunday evening that I went to take leave of Clara; she lay on a couch placed near a window which commanded an extensive view bounded by Cader Idris. She was very thin and pale, but lovely as a Madonna. I tried to be composed; but when I saw around the toys of our childhood, our books, the little cradle in which I had rocked her, and the tiny yacht she so admired—I was quite unmanned, and tears started to my eyes. She did not perceive them, for, probably, affected by the same recollections, she had buried her face on the pillow. Waller entered with coffee and a tray covered with fruit and sweetmeats.

“See, Freville,” said Clara cheerfully, “ill as I was, I did not forget the old habit of celebrating events by a little *fête*.”

I tried to smile and partake of them, but my emotions were too powerful. I allude to these circumstances, apparently so trivial, because they serve to show the purity and simplicity of her habits, afterwards so cruelly misconstrued. After a while we became more composed, and as none of us could partake of the delicacies, she desired Waller to pack them for me in a basket. Though I smiled at the idea of a young officer travelling with sweetmeats, I would not mortify her by a refusal; she then presented to me a locket with her hair, and a very handsome writing desk.

“And here, Freville,” she added, “as the Tennants have been so kind to you, bear this parcel to your beautiful Aigline, with my kindest regards, and say, I hope at some future period to claim her acquaintance and friendship as a sister.”

I coloured with vexation at her having so readily received the false impression; but either not noticing my agitation or imputing it to some other motive, she continued:

“It is valuable Lisle and Brussels lace which Lady Plinlimmon sent me; as I have a long mourning, do oblige me by taking it to Miss Tennant.”

I was going to reply, and probably would have betrayed myself, but the physician entered, hastily saying,

“Can it be possible my patient is still up? I must be very angry, particularly with you, Mrs. Waller, who should have been more attentive to my instructions.”

She apologized by saying, that I was going off next morning to Malta, and that Miss Arnheim wished to prolong our interview.

“Hem!” he drily replied, “the very reason why you should have shortened it; but Mr. Deerhurst is too reasonable to injure the health of his fair cousin, so must now bid good night—and the shorter the adieus the better.”

There was no resisting this command, while my very heart quivered at the agony of parting. I rose, and took Clara’s hand, but could not utter a word; with all the *naïveté* of her pure nature, she laid hers on my shoulder, affectionately kissed me, and sobbed out,

“God bless you, my own dear cousin Freville.”

I pressed her convulsively in my arms, and without speaking, rushed from the apartment. Next day, after taking a polite leave of Mr. Aylsbury, I quitted for ever the beloved scenes of Cader Idris and the Parsonage, and proceeded on my rapid route to London.

CHAPTER XII.

IT was on the fifth of November that I arrived in London, and nothing could appear more deserted and triste than that great city. The short day had closed in, but as I had so many preparations to engage my attention, on the following morning after partaking of some refreshments I drove off to the Tennants'. The hall, as usual, was brilliantly lighted. I sprung from the carriage and entered with the familiarity of an old friend, when the servants told me Mr. Tennant was from home, and, for the last week, Miss Tennant had been confined to her apartment by a cold. This was a severe disappointment. To depart from England without bidding Aigline adieu seemed impossible, so I wrote on my card, "Dear Aigline, the day after to-morrow I leave London, and next week quit England for an indefinite period ; if possible then let me see you this evening. Think how wretched I must be if you are too ill to receive me !" In a

few moments the servant returned with an answer : it was a request that I would adjourn to the music-room where she would soon join me. Although I did not experience the deep emotion I always felt at the prospect of seeing Clara, I was a good deal excited, and waited impatiently for her entrance. She had retired to rest, but hurried on a loose morning robe, and as her hair was folded up, still retained her night-cap. Neither painting nor poetry could do justice to Aigline's exquisite loveliness, as panting from haste she rushed into the room exclaiming, " Oh ! Freville, I was afraid you might not have leisure to wait, and I am so happy to see you again, and have so much to relate." The servant now brought in lights, for before there was but a solitary lamp; and we were left alone. I know not how it occurred, our intercourse for years had been so intimate—the intimacy commenced in childhood—but we both felt abashed and remained silent ; at length she said : " Freville, you are looking miserably ill. Is anything the matter ?" I spoke of my uncle's death, and my separation from Clara. She sighed, and emphatically said ; " Loving her as you do, how can you endure this parting, uncertain when you will meet again ?"

I replied, " Aigline, we are beings of a strange mysterious destiny ; the heart which struggles with

possibilities yields to necessity. Clara and I for the present must separate." I gave this evasive answer, for I was too vain to admit that her coldness rendered my love almost hopeless. There was another pause, and then Aigline said sadly, "And yet I envy you both: for when you are sincerely attached to any one, it is desolate to stand alone in the world."

To cheer a dejection so unusual to her lively spirits, and which I imputed to illness, in a tone of gaiety I cried, "Aigline, where is the gay, the gallant Lord Beletrieve?"

She started up, and clasping her hands, exclaimed: "Speak not of the monster! I told you he was my destiny, and that it must be evil." Uttering these words she flung herself with an air of distraction, that perfectly shocked me, on the couch. I waited till the first paroxysm of her passion passed off, and then sitting down near her, entreated she would acquaint me with the cause of such agitation.

She replied, "You say that the day after to-morrow you depart from England, if so, probably we never meet again." She sighed, "of course you dine here to-morrow—you could not desert us the last day. I know my father has an engagement for the evening, and I shall have an opportunity of confiding to you the cause of my

unhappiness, for indeed, Freville, I am very wretched."

"And why not now? Aigline," I exclaimed, as I sat beside her and pressed her hand within mine. Here we are alone—with no fear of interruption."

She withdrew her hand in confusion, again sighed, and then in a hurried accent exclaimed, "It is a very late hour, my father is from home, and not even acquainted with your arrival; latterly, more than once, he has accused me of being giddy, perhaps with too much cause. Come tomorrow, Freville, and I shall my tale unfold." So saying, in spite of my efforts to detain her she ran out of the room.

On the following day I had so much to do, that Mr. Tennant's dinner was nearly over when I arrived; however he received me and my apologies with his usual affectionate politeness, and Aigline said she began to fear that I had forgotten my engagement. After the fuss of re-ordering the soup, &c., was over, I observed with regret that both Aigline and Mr. Tennant looked very ill. There was something forced in their cheerfulness; and their manner to each other, which was wont to be so playful and engaging, appeared restrained. All this gave me uneasiness, and I anxiously longed for an explanation. When the

dessert was laid on the table, after hastily swallowing a few glasses of wine, Mr. Tennant rose saying, "Freville, I have an engagement which cannot be postponed; however, I shall return in a couple of hours to join you and Aigline at supper. Cheer up, my love," he said tenderly stooping over her, and pressing his lips to her forehead. She started up, threw her arms round his neck and kissing him affectionately, called out, "Oh! my dear, dear father." He returned her embrace and darted off.

"Let us adjourn to the music-room, Aigline," I cried. "Something has happened to render you unhappy. Am I to be denied your confidence?"

"Oh! no," she replied, 'my heart is breaking to tell you all that has occurred since you left us'—and unable to proceed she burst into tears. I pressed her to take a glass of wine, and then led her to the music-room; but she appeared so agitated, that to relieve her, I began to talk of Clara, handing her the parcel of lace;—this had the desired effect. Without looking at the lace, she expressed her gratitude, asking me numerous questions. When I mentioned that Clara was going to reside with Lady Aylsbury, and her regret on the occasion, she replied sadly, "Is it not a strange fact that every thing in this world goes contrary to our wishes? There is Miss Arn-

heim, who would prefer retirement, going to be launched into fashionable life, under the auspices of one of its highest members; for though Lady Aylsbury is in herself nothing remarkable, she belongs to the Plinlimmon party, and that is sufficient to ensure her consequence; and, here am I, who sacrificed so much to please the Beletrieve set—driven in disgrace from their society—disgraced because I cannot copy their vices.”

It was long before I could persuade her to be more explicit. At length, after having obtained from me a solemn promise of secrecy, and that I would not resent the insult she had received, in hurried accents she said: “Freville, the subject is so exciting to my temper that I must be brief in my recital. In pity’s sake do not interrupt me, as I dread that my father may return before I have told you what I wish to confide to you.” I promised all she requested, and with much agitation she began:

“Freville, for about a month after you left London, things went on much as usual; I was constantly engaged in a round of fashionable amusements, chaperoned not only by Lady Mainstown, but by other ladies of even higher rank; in short, I was all the rage. And now that my sun is set, I may admit the proud truth of being a belle.” She sighed deeply. “One drawback

there was to my enjoyment. Lord Beletrieve was ever at my side doing the agreeable. I strove in vain to elude the vigilance of his attention, he was the very realization of the fable ; there was no shaking the old man off. If I danced, he stuck at my elbow in the set, until the movement began, and then when I got to the end I was sure to find him ready to receive me. When I played he leant over the piano to arrange my music ; or, if it was the harp, he would insist on accompanying me ; and when, to foil him, I chose airs too difficult, he would stay near to beat time with his foot. Freville, you know the unbounded vivacity of my temper ; sometimes I was so provoked that I would try to get rid of him by being actually rude ; but he played me off with his usual calmness, or made me shrink before him by one of his shrugs or ghastly sneers ; or he would say, ‘ Aigline, you are fond of quotations, so let me assure you, much as you despise me, that I am the magician on whom all your present consequence depends.’ Well, Freville, at other times his attentions, especially when I was at the piano and harp, appeared so ludicrous that I could scarcely command my laughter. To all this he appeared perfectly insensible : yet there was not a thought of my soul he did not study for his own dark purpose.

“A month passed thus. His Lordship was then confined to his apartment by the gout. To disguise the painful fact, his domestics, as usual, reported that he had retired to the country. Oh vanity! what mortal would despise your power, when even the tortures of disease are secondary to your influence? But, Freville, you look impatient—know then, that removed from the Beletrieve’s engrossing attentions, I made a conquest of Sir Henry Lyndmere; you have met him at Lady Mainstown’s, so no need of description. My father was in perfect delight when he proposed, for though inferior in rank and fortune to Lord Chancery, in every other respect he was far preferable. I looked forward to my nuptials with a composed but rational—most rational, expectation of happiness. Henry Lyndmere, a man of great refinement, and who passionately loved me, proclaimed his good fortune: all seemed prosperous, when Lord Beletrieve, by anonymous letters, cruel representations, smiles, sneers, shrugs, and the vilest insinuations, cast the foulest calumnies upon me. You may well start, Freville; my brain burns when I reflect on this injury. Let me then be brief: Sir Henry Lyndmere broke off our intended marriage. Oh! the bitterness with which he accused—scorned me; the very excess of his love taught him to deride my protestations

of innocence !. . . .Worse than all, this has nearly broken my father's heart, and so irritated him against me, that though I was ill, dangerously ill, since Sir Henry's departure until this evening, he has scarcely deigned to speak to me."

She wept hysterically: I attempted to soothe her.

"Good heaven, Aigline!" I cried, "surely it is not possible that you mean to let Lord Beletrieve triumph over you in this manner?"

"What am I to do?" she answered. "Were I capable of bringing his conduct before the public, I have no proofs, although in my heart I am fully aware that all the insults and neglect I have received originate in him: still, he is too politic to place himself in any one's power. I tell you, Freville, he is a perfect Belial, and under the soft words of compliment and praise, I have heard him destroy the reputation of women probably as innocent as myself."

"I never thought of bringing the business before the public," I answered, "it would be a ruinous measure; but why not let me your friend and connexion challenge him?"

She interrupted me hastily:

"I demand that you give me a solemn pledge not to interfere in this business."

"Listen patiently, I entreat, just while I re-

present one circumstance that you seem to overlook. Aigline, it were madness in you to tell your father; the fury that must animate him, if he knew you were so insulted, would naturally deprive him of all calmness and discretion; but it is not so with me. Aigline, I would not kill Lord Beletrieve, but if we meet, you shall be amply revenged; and should he refuse my challenge, he shall be branded throughout England as a liar and a coward."

Far from entering into my views, Aigline, (who with all her levity was perfectly timid and feminine) threw herself on her knees, accusing me of betraying her confidence, insisting on my solemn promise not to interfere: so, what with tears, entreaties, and my dread of her committing some act of violence, I at length consented to take no notice of Lord Beletrieve's insult; indeed I had no opportunity, for he had left London, and was not expected back for some weeks, and I must either forfeit my commission, or join my regiment within a few days. Yet I was bitterly mortified and provoked to think that such a villain should go unpunished, and expressed so much vexation, that poor Aigline, forgetting she was the one injured, began to soothe me; and to change the subject, said:—

"I suspect, Freville, it is my father's intention to dispose of our house, and leave England."

I demanded had she any idea where he was likely to settle?

"Not the least," she answered; "but I sincerely hope not in Cork, where former friends might receive him coldly.

I then intreated of her to write to me constantly.

She sighed deeply, saying, "It would afford me much pleasure; but, Freville, without my father's permission I dare not promise; latterly I have offended him, and you know how I respect and love him; besides," she added, "I have suffered so much from thoughtlessness, which, indeed, is the source of all my errors, that I am resolved never again to act indiscreetly, so, when you return from distant lands you shall find me a grave, prudent, demure, domestic girl, perhaps matron," and she gave one of her brilliant laughs: Alas! poor Aigline, when next we met how different was your lot!

Mr. Tennant returned soon after; he appeared dejected, remarked it was very cold, and ringing the bell, ordered the refreshments to be brought to the music-room. None of us had inclination to partake of them; but, forcing a glass of wine on Aigline, he kissed her cheek, and in an affectionate tone said, "Freville, does she not look very ill?" My reply was lost by Aigline throwing her arms round his neck, and sobbing hysterically.

“Go to rest, my dear child,” he said. She turned towards me, reaching out her hand. “No leave-takings,” he exclaimed, “you are already too much excited,” and he was hurrying her away.

“Aigline, you must write to me,” I exclaimed. She looked beseechingly at her father, who gravely answered: — “No, Freville, you are the betrothed of another, as such, I cannot countenance your correspondence.” I heard a sigh from Aigline, the next minute the door closed after her.

Mr. Tennant returned and sat down near the fire, with forced gaiety saying: — “Freville, draw over the small table, and place the glasses and decanters on it. The parting of friends is always sad; let us cheer ourselves with wine.” I obeyed, and we began to converse, but were both absent, and after a few moments sunk into silence. Half an hour might have passed when I arose, and, taking him by the hand, said, “Mr. Tennant, in leaving England as a military man, it is hard to say whether we shall ever again meet. Receive, then, my grateful thanks for all the kindness and hospitality you have shown me, and, rest assured, that with life only can I cease to remember it.”

He started up, looking perfectly wild, then

striking his forehead, in a smothered voice he said :—" Freville, I have loved you almost as a son, and I now place in you a confidence which I would blush to intrust to my noble-minded George, who since his mother is gone is the best and wisest of us all. Freville, I am a ruined man ! ruined by my own inexcusable folly ! Yet though I do not despise the advantages of that fortune I have so wantonly cast away, still, if the misfortune fell solely on myself, I could bear it with fortitude." He paused, overcome with emotion, then added, " Happily George, by my friend's legacy, is independent of me, and my only uneasiness respecting him arises from the mortification of losing his good opinion ; for, disguise it as he may, the heroic noble-minded youth must in his soul despise me." He groaned aloud again, striking his forehead.

I felt so shocked and grieved, that I was unable to reply. I must, indeed, have been dead to all good feeling, if I had not regretted any misfortune that fell on my generous, hospitable friend.

Too much agitated to notice my silence, he resumed his conversation, saying, " Freville, I feel that the consciousness of my own folly will shorten my life. Gambling is a terrible propensity, one to which I have always been

addicted, although while in business I deceived myself and others by calling it speculation; but these regrets and observations are out of place. Freville, you say that you owe me some kindness, have it so. Now, mark me, if amidst the vicissitudes of this life, my poor Aigline should ever want a friend, or protector, promise to be to her as a brother. She is a noble-minded, high-spirited girl, generous to a romantic degree, but vain, thoughtless, yielding, and inexperienced. Oh! you know not how cruelly since her mother's death I have neglected her, and squandered away the fortune that by right should be her's, yet she loves me with filial tenderness. I wander from my subject. Swear, Freville Deerhurst, swear that when I am gone and George absent, should circumstances require it, that you will be to Aigline as a guardian, holding her honour sacred, as if she was, indeed, your sister; thus will you amply requite any kindness I may have shown you."

I fell on my knees, and, calling to Heaven to witness, exclaimed, "I swear; and, as I hold my oath sacred, may God reward me." He pressed my hand, muttered some words of thanks, and then bade me a hasty adieu.

CHAPTER XIII.

As the next six years of my life were totally unconnected with her, in justice to whose memory I have written this Memoir, I shall hasten over them, merely alluding to a few circumstances necessary to the understanding of future events. I joined my corps at Dover, and in the July of 1805 sailed for Malta, to join the service companies.

My reception by my corps, and to which my father had formerly belonged, was at first flattering; for as the son of Lionel Deerhurst, I was expected to be a good and generous fellow; but my popularity soon vanished, for I not only had a perfect abhorrence of intemperance, but when influenced by example to indulge, the excess far from enlivening, only stupified me. Conscious of this, I resisted all entreaties to partake in their revels with a pertinacity very offensive to the merry companions of the Light Infantry, which,

amidst all its changes and chances, still retained its ancient character for good fellowship. Then as the grandson, and supposed heir of Sir Roger Deerhurst, I was expected to be rich, and, being too vain to explain away the mistake, the economy I was obliged to practice was imputed to closeness, and far from gaining merit for my prudence, I was dubbed a stingy, niggardly, good-for-nothing fellow, the very reverse of my father. Again, I was vain of my person; and, though I utterly despised Lord Beletrieve's villany, I retained my admiration for his graceful address, which I strove to imitate. In truth, he formed a pleasing contrast to the roughness of some of the officers, who, by an awkward mistake, seemed to associate noisy, coarse habits and manners with gallantry of conduct, so that my politeness, far from eliciting admiration, was considered as puppyism. However, I soon established for myself the character of being an admirable officer, was strictly attentive to my military duties, and by my knowledge in music improved the band, which since my father's time had fallen off rapidly; all this gained for me the notice of my commander, and taught the other officers to treat me with respect; so after a period the first feeling against me abated, and on the whole, my time passed agreeably enough, though, except to a young person, our pleasures must have appeared trifling.

Our principal amusement was to ride from St. Elmos into Villetta, where we generally lunched on partridges, then wandered through the town in quest of adventures, after which most of the officers rode back to their quarters roaring drunk. There was also much gambling going forward. I seldom played deep, for, like my father, if the emergencies of the moment were supplied, I had no taste for money; however, except on the subject of drink, my companions had no cause to complain of my prudence.

I remained upwards of twelve months in Malta, when our corps were sent to Messina, and from thence we accompanied General Mc Kenzie's squadron to Egypt, with the view of capturing Alexandria, and were so fortunate as to succeed; we afterwards made an attempt to take Rosetta, but from events I shall not pause to relate, were defeated. There the English met with immense loss, and I received a wound in my right wrist, which for the time disabled me. However, I was honoured by the compliments of General Mc Kenzie, for my gallantry in leading on a party of my men to the storming. I also obtained my lieutenancy. Soon after, negotiations of peace were entered into, and the Turks having restored the prisoners they had captured from us at Rosetta, we set off for Sicily.

Upwards of two years had passed since I

quitted England, and from that period I received no intelligence of my friends. This was a serious annoyance during the first six months. I had written to Mr. Tennant and to Mr. Moneymore, but neither of them had replied; it afterwards appeared that the neglect was owing to the chances of war in which at the time all Europe was engaged, and our regiment being celebrated for its gallantry—as I have already remarked—was sent from one post of danger to another.

When I had been about a month in Sicily, two letters that had been directed to Egypt reached me. The one was from the West Indies, announcing that my father, from whom I had been so long parted, had fallen a victim to yellow fever; the other—let me confess it—afflicted me still more severely, being from Lady Aylsbury, containing the intelligence of Clara's marriage.

Lady Aylsbury's letter, though written on a subject generally considered joyful, to me was even more agonizing than my father's death; for it announced that Clara was going to be married to a Mr. Lascelles, a nephew of her Ladyship's, and of whom she spoke with all the pompous egotism of her character, representing him as a person of graceful manners, superior accomplishments, and noble principles. After this tirade, she added:

“Mr. Deerhurst, I consider it my duty, as the present guardian of Miss Arnheim, and the aunt

of Mr. Lascelles, to explain that he is a person very fastidious in his ideas of women ; indeed, to what I term a foolish degree ; but this error,—for it amounts to error,—is excusable in him, as some years since a very awful tragedy occurred in his family, owing to the indiscretion of one of its members. Observe, Mr. Deerhurst, my name was Lascelles, so that the unfortunate lady to whom I allude, though connected by marriage, was no blood relative. No, no ! all the women of our family were uniformly chaste and prudent. But to return to Mr. Lascelles, knowing this weakness of character, I have, though with difficulty—prevailed upon Clara—whose mind is replete with old-fashioned ideas of candour, ingenuousness, and such stuff—no doubt acquired from her father, who from his position could know little of the conventions of good society—never to allude to your name ; for I know my son, the Rev. Mr. Aylsbury suspected you to be greatly attached to each other ; and were she to speak of you, what with your being the grandson of Sir Roger Deerhurst, and her nearest relative, Mr. Lascelles would naturally make inquiries, and when he learned that you were a friend of Lord Beletrieve's—a frequenter of the Cosmopolite Club—now held so infamous, why the result would be, Mr. Lascelles instantly breaking off his marriage. And if the business was bruited

about, though I am perfectly aware of Miss Arnheim's purity, I certainly could not extend my protection to her; for after all, except in a few flagrant instances, every one's character depends upon report. Then reflect, what would become of Clara? For the Plinlimmons, her best friends, are residing on the continent; besides, she is too beautiful to introduce to their sons. Clara has argued the point with me: in the first instance, she credits nothing to your disadvantage, then she insists that all mysteries are bad, and that if Mr. Aylsbury were in England, he would disapprove of her keeping any secret from Mr. Lascelles, to whom she declares herself sincerely attached. She asserts that you and she from childhood, viewing each other in the light of brother and sister, never entertained a warmer sentiment; and that if she really loved you, no earthly power should induce her to falsify her solemn vows at the altar by giving her hand to another. Now, Mr. Deerhurst, all this sounds well, and I by no means condemn Miss Arnheim for the little artifice—it is her sex's province—and, if she expressed herself otherwise, I should consider her indiscreet, as your candid Misses are always accused of effrontery. However, as the preparations for her nuptials are advancing rapidly, I shall soon be relieved from my charge; for I assure you, Mr. Deerhurst, the guardianship of a

young lady is a very serious obligation ; moreover, to me, as I propose going to Italy, and Clara is to accompany me there, it would, of necessity, add much to my expense. This was one of the reasons why, from the commencement, I encouraged Mr. Lascelles' passion ; for, impressed with the memory of his mother's guilt, and being a person of powerful sensibilities, he from boyhood has encouraged a presentiment that, if he ever married he should be unfortunate. Consequently, though now past three and thirty, and much admired, he resisted all temptations, resolved to die a bachelor, till he met Clara, whose gentleness, want of showy accomplishments, retired, and religious education, all suited his views. Now, Mr. Deerhurst, admire my generalship,—knowing that Mr. Lascelles and Mr. Aylsbury were attached friends, indeed, to what I consider an absurd and romantic degree, I never told the former of Clara's intimacy with Mr. Aylsbury or the Plinlimmons until every thing for her union was arranged ; then I wrote off to acquaint them, and to ask, as her guardian, Mr. Aylsbury's consent, adding we all know how fastidious Mr. Lascelles is. Consequently, Clara, who tenderly loves him, and has been much shocked at receiving various accounts of Mr. Deerhurst's dissipation (who, fortunately, is now out of Europe) has resolved not to mention his name, as she really is ashamed

of her relationship to him. So, my dear friends, she and I mutually request that in your letters you will not allude to him; and then, I added, I really think that when by the order of Nature we possess no control about who shall or shall not be our relatives, it is very hard we should be accountable for their faults. However, there is no use in setting up opinions, however justly formed, against the custom of ages. Well, Mr. Deerhurst, in due time came letters from Mr. Aylsbury and the Plinlimmons, expressive of their delight at Clara's happy prospects, and congratulating Mr. Lascelles on his choice, eulogizing Clara and her old father up to the skies: better than all, they took my hint, and never alluded to your name. Then there were innumerable presents to the bride elect—I must admit, very rich ones; and, as the Plinlimmons cannot come over to England, the Lascelles (I speak in the plural, for long ere you receive this Clara will be married) are to pay their first bridal visit to Italy, and then Lady Gertrude Plinlimmon's long-projected nuptials with Mr. Aylsbury are to be consummated. So you see, Mr. Deerhurst, I have provided nobly for my *protégée*, whom, in despite of some old-fashioned, prosy, countrified ideas, I tenderly love, for, during a long and tedious illness with which I was afflicted this winter, she paid me the most indefatigable atten-

tion. Night after night she sat up by my couch, and, when you consider how destructive late hours are to a girl's looks, it was a wonderful proof of kindness. However, I am happy to say that, though she grew rather thin and delicate, her beauty did not suffer, for, as Mr. Lascelles observes, it is the expression of her countenance which renders her so lovely. Mr. Deerhurst, I shall now conclude, and, as an antidote to any offence my candour may have given, I inclose a short letter from Clara, which I permitted her to write, on obtaining her promise of never again addressing you.

“I have the honour to remain,

“Yours, &c., &c.

“LOUISA AYLSBURY.”

Frantic with jealousy and rage, without even opening Clara's letter, I crushed it under my feet, and, tearing it into atoms flung it away. I felt that the hope of being married to her was fled, and with it the brightest charm of my existence. In vain I called to mind her dependent position and my poverty; the reflection, far from soothing, only awakened my darker passions, and led me to curse Sir Roger, whose injustice and cupidity had left me in poverty. It may be said, was not Clara's indifference so often expressed, and the attachment she

professed for Mr. Lascelles sufficient to reconcile me to our separation? Could a passion such as mine exist without sympathy, return, or hope? To this I can only answer, that led on by some fatality, or, to speak more correctly, by inordinate vanity, I persuaded myself that Clara ardently loved me, though obliged to deny it from timidity, or policy, or some other motive, for my heart always found a plausible excuse to nourish this fatal mistake. Again, it may be said, how did this supposition agree with my knowledge of the simplicity and truth of her character? Alas! it is in vain to argue, passion is ever made up of contradictions; and it is so terrible to think that the person whom we love beyond all earthly things, for whom we would sacrifice our very being, feels no reciprocal sentiment, that we wilfully deceive ourselves into the vain belief.

It is impossible to say to what results my melancholy might have led, had not my distraction been somewhat relieved by the arrival of my old friend Charles Mellish in Sicily, who had been gazetted to an ensigncy in my regiment, and now arrived to join his corps.

CHAPTER XIV.

AFTER my long sojourn abroad—during which the active duties of my profession left me little leisure to reflect on the past, or form schemes for the future, I returned with my regiment to England, in the May of 1811. Finding that the Tennants had left Grosvenor Square, and filled with misgivings as to their fate, I resolved to seek out Mr. Moneymore, in hopes of his being able to resolve my doubts. I succeeded in finding him at home, and on entering his presence was struck with the change in that peculiar person's outward man, occasioned by the absence of his cherished wig. Thinking that I had surprised him in *dishabille*, I could not refrain from maliciously inquiring after my old acquaintance, the *perruque à la Beletrieve*.

"Mr. Deerhurst," he replied quite seriously, "the Beletrieves are out of fashion, and these hideous crops—touching his head—all the go. Mr. Deerhurst, nothing but your long residence abroad could have left you in ignorance of these interesting facts."

"Is it possible," I exclaimed, "that that great

cynosure of London fashion, Lord Beletrieve, is dead?"

"To all intents and purposes," he replied with vivacity, "though in the actual sense of the word he still lives, nay, breathes the air of London, and sometimes forces himself into those societies where he was once sought for as the greatest charm."

"You surprise, but do not grieve me," I answered; "for I despise the man."

"Every one despises him now," coldly retorted Mr. Moneymore, "for his fortune and health are broken, and worse than all the Prince has quarrelled with him."

"May I ask for an explanation?" I demanded hastily. "I sincerely hope it is owing to his false assertions about Miss Tennant, whom you, Mr. Moneymore, may recollect, as I have seen you at her father's?"

"Can you be in earnest," he exclaimed, gazing on me with surprise, "to suppose for a moment that our Royal Prince would turn champion to all the pretty and giddy misses in London? Positively, Mr. Deerhurst, the notion is quite Egyptian, that is, if the once learned Egyptians have turned fools or madmen; but I know nothing of them."

"If you did," I answered tartly, "you would as soon accuse yourself of romance or chivalry; but you mistook me, I did not suppose his Royal

Highness had heard of the reports circulated against Miss Tennant, far less would he interest himself on the occasion. I merely meant to suggest that Lord Beletrieve's conduct to her, which I have no hesitation in pronouncing infamous, nay, I would say so to his face, might have thrown such obloquy upon his character, that his Royal Highness declined his acquaintance."

"Why, Mr. Deerhurst, that is a very big speech, and as an Irishman would say—you looked very big entirely while you spoke it;—but to end all the suggestions, by which you make a heroine of that fool Tennant's daughter, in a few words I shall solve the mystery—observe, I say in a few words, for it was a political business; and being no politician, it is a subject I always avoid; first, because I feel no interest in it, except as it may effect stock—next, I consider it dangerous, as it leads to quarrelling. Now, to come to the point, when Lord Beletrieve tired of his liaison, or as he delicately termed it, his familiarity with Miss Tennant—"

Here I interrupted him by standing up and vehemently declaring Miss Tennant's innocence, and my resolve to challenge any one who presumed to doubt it. This violence, which certainly bordered on rudeness, offended Mr. Moneymore, and it was some time before I could persuade him to renew the subject. He then in a peevish tone demanded :

“What term shall I use, Mr. Deerhurst, least likely to rouse your temper? And as you choose to be so very abrupt in your manner, you must excuse my candour in saying, that your sojourn abroad has not improved your politeness.”

I made some blundering apology; and after a time he proceeded, first in a sullen voice, but gradually, however, he became more cheerful and communicative.

“Well, Mr. Deerhurst, whatever was the cause, on Lord Beletrieve’s breaking off his intimacy with the Tennants, he insinuated that he had found this Aigline, with whom you appear so much in love, so insufferably vain and ill-tempered, that in spite of her beauty and musical talents, he had quitted her in disgust.”

I became enraged at this. The man’s insolence and self-sufficiency were enough to provoke a saint, and I never professed to be one.

“What do you mean, Mr. Moneymore,” said I, “by speaking of persons with whom I was intimately acquainted in this manner? I am deeply interested in knowing what has become of them. You can be a man of few words when you please, especially when money matters are in question. Suppose that I am to pay you for your information, and be concise.”

He was offended at this, for the wretched fellow was, as the world goes, honest, and he replied somewhat sharply,

"My dear Sir, if I must call you so familiarly, what do you mean by the insult your words seem to put upon me? I was telling you of the Tennants."

"Indeed you were not," I interrupted; "it was of them, and of their present abode I wished to be made acquainted."

"Sir," said Mr. Moneymore, "I wish it were possible to do what the old proverb tells us cannot be done, namely, to put old heads on young shoulders. Could that have been done, and had it been done in your case, I should have heard a very different speech from you. Now, Sir, Lord Beletrieve ——"

Aware of Mr. Moneymore's prolixity on the Beletrieve subject, I interrupted him by exclaiming, "Excuse me, but it is of the Tennants of whom I would speak."

He answered peevishly :

"It is in bad taste, Mr. Deerhurst, to tease me about these people,—nobodies, who would never have been noticed but for Lord Beletrieve's weak passion for the daughter; however, to satisfy your impatience, I shall acquaint you that some years since—soon after you first joined your regiment—Tennant, who was neither more nor less than a vain gambler, was finally done; and his fine house, stud, &c., to none of which was he entitled, went to the hammer. By-the-bye, I attended the

sheriff's sale, and picked up some good bargains."

Smothering my regrets, I said, "And what of his daughter?"

He replied carelessly :

"I heard some report of her having married an old Scotch Highlander of ancient family, a General, Mc Misserton ; indeed, I understood he was old enough to be her grandfather."

"Good heaven !" I exclaimed, "is it possible that Aigline could so sacrifice herself?"

"Excuse me, Mr. Deerhurst, his marrying her is the wonder ; for when a young lady is minus ~~of~~ both cash and character, she is glad to patch both up by a marriage of convenience."

I sighed bitterly at the idea that a little thoughtless levity should have so humbled Aigline, as to entitle every fellow to speak ill of her ; her marriage too grieved me, for though I had never loved her with the ardour and devotion I experienced for Clara—still from the period the latter was united to Mr. Lascelles, a distant hope of Aigline's yet being mine had pressed on my fancy. Observing the sneering expression of Mr. Moneymore, as he rather rudely stared at me, I commanded my emotion, and said in a negligent manner :

"Can you tell me, has Miss Tennant's match proved fortunate?"

"No ! her union proved unfortunate : the old

Highlander was prudent and domestic—she gay and extravagant; however, they struggled on together till Mr. Tennant, who had returned to London and resumed his gambling habits, became so involved that he was seized, and thrown into the King's Bench prison. Now mark her extreme folly! She immediately quitted her husband to share with him his imprisonment, and there continued till Tennant's death. By the by, soon after his decease, all London was in a blaze about some battle gained, I think at a place called Suholt, in which his son, George Tennant, had distinguished himself. To say truth, I feel so little interest in what you call England's glory, I never inquired the particulars."

I sighed deeply, and asked him, did he know what had become of Mrs. Mc Misserton, after her father's death?

"I never heard," he replied; "but conclude she returned to her Scotch Laird, who, I believe, was very much attached to her."

"Are you acquainted with his direction?" I demanded, for anxiety to hear about Aigline conquered my dislike to his cavalier manner of answering.

"No, Mr. Deerhurst; but any letter directed to *the* Mc Misserton, of Glenlow Castle, in the Highlands, is sure to reach him, even without the shire. Don't forget to put the—*the*," and again

Moneymore gave his provoking self-satisfied smirk.

I bowed and said : “ Mr. Moneymore, I must trespass still further on your patience, while I inquire whether Sir Roger has made any communication to you relative to a letter I wrote to him some months since, requesting that he would authorize you to give me money to purchase a troop. At present, through the interest of General Mc Kenzie, I have the opportunity ; and really, it would be as cruel as unjust to deprive me of the advantage. These stirring times, it is painful to a military man to have his sword lying idle in its scabbard ; and our regiment has been so long abroad, and is so exhausted from sickness, that there is no chance, I hear, of our being sent to the Peninsula.”

“ I can assure you, Mr. Deerhurst, when your name was announced, I concluded it was on that subject you called, so, though pressed with business, admitted you ; and here you have wasted my time with fruitless gossip, about persons in whom I never felt any interest ; though, I fancy, Mr. Deerhurst, in that we differ,—for you seem to have a very lively interest for Mrs. Mc Miserton.”

I offered some apology ; then, with more kindness than he had ever before addressed me, he said :

“Mr. Deerhurst, Sir Roger has written to me on the subject; and, though my employer, I must admit that he is unjust, and, I may add, inexplicable. He excuses himself for not purchasing your troop, under the plea of a present fall upon East India Stock—writes as if his very existence depended upon accumulation! and then, boasts of the splendour with which his son Etienne is surrounded; indeed, he expresses himself towards him with the weakness of dotage.”

I sighed as I reflected on Etienne's brilliant prospects, while my poor father had died in obscurity! And then inquired of Mr. Money-more, what kind of youth he was reported to be.

He answered: “My Pondicherry correspondents represent him as of noble form, but proud, impatient of control, and violent in his temper; moreover, wild and dissipated to a degree.”

“Good Heavens!” I cried, “can Sir Roger be aware of this? And if so, can he endure patiently such faults, when he disinherited my father, his eldest son, for errors comparatively venial!”

“He both knows of Etienne's faults, and excuses them. And now, Mr. Deerhurst, I must bid you good bye, for I am obliged to go to the Exchange. However, should you feel inclined

again to address Sir Roger, I shall forward your letter, and should be happy at receiving his commands to purchase your troop."

I thanked him graciously, we shook hands, and I retired.

On returning to the hotel, I wrote to Aigline, in an affectionate, but distant style; congratulating her on her brother's gallantry and success, but avoiding all allusion to her father's death; in a careless manner I mentioned, that as soon as the grouse shooting commenced, it was my intention to go to Scotland, when I promised myself the pleasure of visiting her in her Highland home, and also of being introduced to the Mc Misserton. I then mentioned that I hoped soon to purchase my troop; observed that her early friend, and my Cork school-fellow, Charles Mellish, was in the same corps with me, and would accompany me to Scotland. In short, I wrote in a manner which I considered the most jealous husband could not object to:—all the time anticipating what fun Aigline and I should find, in bringing our Irish humbug into requisition, at once to deceive and humour the old General.

Next day I quitted London for Bath, hoping to find the dowager Lady Aylsbury there, and through her, learn something of the Lascelles.

It was strange, that every allusion to Clara filled me with sadness, whereas, even when I heard that Aigline was unhappily married, I could only associate her image with gaiety ; but, again, I was disappointed : Lady Aylsbury had not been in Bath for three years, and all I could learn respecting her or Clara was, that immediately after the nuptials of the latter, they had all set off for Italy.

This was a severe disappointment. My chief pleasure in returning to England, was the hope of seeing Clara—overlooking her union with another, and the ties which then probably cemented it, and which should have taught me to conquer my passion. I nourished her ideas, priding myself on the strength of a hopeless attachment. Charles Mellish was my confidant, and I was sure of his sympathy, for he judged of my sentiments for Clara, by his own romantic feelings of devotion to Aigline, for whom his boyish love continued in all its force—I may add, purity ; for while he execrated and mourned over her union with the Mc Misserton, he declined the proposal of accompanying me to Scotland.

“No,” he said, “why should I revive a love now criminal ? And I esteem Aigline too much to indulge a single wish derogatory to her honour.”

In every respect Mellish was a fine specimen of an Irish gentleman : intelligent, liberal, and courageous ; honourable to romance in his ideas, he was slow to credit meanness or deceit in others ; but these noble traits were shaded by a wild and thoughtless love of adventure—a readiness to oblige even those unworthy of the kindness ; thus he was eternally involving himself in scrapes, and the ready ingenuity, and playful wit, with which he managed to get out of them amused his corps, with which he was a general favourite.

After waiting with some impatience for General Mc Misserton's answer to my letter, I received the following :

“The Mc Misserton, of Glenlow Castle, has opened a letter directed to a lady called Mrs. Mc Misserton *alias* Aigline Tennant, a shipwright's daughter ; of her he shall make no remark, or give any information to Lieutenant Deerhurst, who, from the style of his address, the Mc Misserton has no doubt, considers himself an extremely knowing, agreeable fellow, ready to make love to any man's wife, if she suit his fancy, and reward the husband for the liberty, by shooting on his manors. All excellent fun, no doubt, to Lieutenant Deerhurst, and his military companion ; but far too refined

for the honest, and somewhat patriarchal habits of the Scottish Highlanders. Now, my young gallant, for such, no doubt you, Lieutenant Deerhurst, consider yourself, in love or idleness, I grant you my permission to travel through the Highlands or Lowlands, as may suit your taste; but if you presume to come poaching within the precincts of Glenlow Castle, I forewarn you, that in spite of modern improvements, you shall find it guarded by a warlike race, jealous of their master's honour; and who would think as little of cutting you down, as you, my sporting Lieutenant, would of shooting my game, or seducing my wife. Now act as you please.

“MC MISSERTON,
“Of Glenlow.”

Although greatly provoked, I could not help being amused at the manner in which my gallant intentions were refuted. Mellish joined in my sincere regret, that Aigline should have been so unfortunate; however, we both agreed that any attempt to visit Glenlow Castle would not only be useless, but might expose her to persecution, and ourselves to danger; so, after indulging in the bitterest invectives against the old sawney, we dismissed the subject. Thus these two lovely women, in truth the only ones

towards whom I ever entertained a sincere attachment, seemed for ever separated from me. Would to Heaven it had been so, and that we had never again met!

The winter passed off pleasantly enough. Our corps were quartered between Chatham and Sheerness, and in the former neighbourhood, some of our officers were paid much attention; but Mellish and I, being but Subs, had few invitations; however, we made frequent parties to London, and formed several agreeable acquaintances among the Navy. Early in February, Colonel Chilli, who commanded, gave me leave of absence, and I accompanied a brother officer to Cumberland, on a visit to some of his friends. While luxuriating amidst its romantic scenery, I received intelligence that my father had left me some property in St. Domingo. It would have been very acceptable, for, still speculating on Sir Roger's rupees, I had incurred several debts. Through the interest of my Colonel I obtained a renewed leave, but my voyage to the West was unfortunate. I was attacked by yellow fever, involved in a law-suit—in short, the bequest did not liquidate the expences incurred; so, after much hardship and a long absence, I returned to England more involved than ever, and immediately joined my corps then quartered in York.

CHAPTER XV.

MELLISH was truly rejoiced at my return, and in talking over some Chatham adventures, mentioned, that after my leaving it he had, through some of his navy friends, formed an acquaintance with a Mrs. Onslow, a pretty little black-eyed Welshwoman, a merchant's wife, who was always inquiring after me, and said she had known me intimately in Wales. This surprised me, as I had no recollection of the name; however, I began to banter Mellish about her, but he assured me that though rather pretty, Mrs. Onslow was very homely, and worse, in his opinion, very saintly.

"Then," I inquired, "what could have induced you to spend so many evenings at her house, as you have just confessed? Was her husband a very good fellow?—I know, Mellish, in point of after-dinner good-fellowship, you are perfectly Irish."

“On the contrary,” he replied, “Onslow was as stupid a commercial man as you ever met—not one idea out of his store-house; but our old school-master’s son, Thomas La Franck, was a constant visitor there, and though he has become a perfect saint, as well as divine, for he has entered into holy orders, still he is a most agreeable person; very musical, and as partial as ever to you, Deerhurst; and then he and I chatted over old times—Cork, the Tennants, &c., &c., and, in short, though La Franck and I had a few squabbles, or I should say that I wrangled with him for trying to make me as good as himself, for his meek spirit would not resent my *brusquerie*, I found him a most pleasing companion. After all, Deerhurst, a little intellect and a high tone of feeling give a zest to conversation; and, to acknowledge a truth, except when our mess converse of the Peninsular War, and its probable results, they talk as confounded nonsense as one could expect to hear from a set of school-girls.”

I sneered, and sarcastically observed: “Then the charm of Mrs. Onslow’s house lay in La Franck’s preaching! He was always a prosy, tiresome youth; though I must admit, obliging, good-natured, and moral. Pray, Mellish, how far have you advanced in your saintly progress?”

Colouring up to the eyes, he refuted the charge

of growing devout, as if the accusation was disgraceful, exclaiming with vivacity :— “ So far, Freville, from liking the eternal preaching about religion, I should not so frequently have attended Mrs. Onslow’s parties, but in expectation of meeting the beautiful Lady Eastville, her particular friend.”

“ And who is the beautiful Lady Eastville ?” I demanded ; “ I never even heard the name before.”

“ Oh ! true,” he answered, “ though she was staying in the neighbourhood of Chatham all the time you were quartered there, with some old dowager, whose name I quite forget, but who had a very pretty place on the banks of the Medway. However, owing to delicate health, Lady Eastville did not go into company until after you left for Cumberland ; had she, you must have heard of her, for nothing was spoken of at the mess but her beauty.”

“ And was she so beautiful ?” I inquired.

He answered, “ I never saw her except once on horseback, and then she was veiled, but her figure appeared fine, and she rode in good style.”

“ I thought, Mellish,” said I, laughing, “ that she was your attraction at Onslow’s. A saint, too ! I conclude by a person of her rank forming

an intimacy with Mrs. Onslow. Forgive me, Mellish, but I rather fancy La Franck was her Ladyship's inducement. I have always heard that these Methodistical fellows are very insinuating among women—"it belongs to their vocation,"—and if La Franck has not disappointed the promise of his youth, he must be a pleasing-looking person."

"Well meant on your side to annoy me," replied Mellish, in the same tone of *badinage*, "but, as the fates were against my meeting Lady Eastville, the point of your wit is lost. Twenty times at least I went to Mrs. Onslow's to see this beauty, but alas! for my hopes, I was either too late, or she had sent an excuse; in short, something always occurred, fortunately, perhaps, as from description I had made up my mind to fall desperately in love."

"But, answer, did La Franck know her?" I demanded.

"Intimately," was the answer, "and he lauded her as a saint. By the by, Freville, I forgot to mention that Mrs. Onslow one evening in speaking of you, said: "I am sorry Freville Deerhurst is not in Chatham now; however, as he is absent, I shall not mention his name to Lady Eastville, though were he here, I most certainly would."

“And what inquiries did you make, Mellish, relative to this observation?”

“None,” he replied, looking vacantly at me; “what could I have made?”

“A thousand,” I said; “first, who is this Mrs. Onslow that so familiarly called me—who never before heard of her—by my christian name? next, why should she speak of me to Lady Eastville?”

“I really don’t know,” said Mellish, carelessly; “except that as you were both beauties, Mrs. Onslow might think it right to extol you to each other without any compliment. Freville, you were considered the handsomest fellow in Chatham, all crowded as it was with the gallant sons of Mars and Neptune.”

Pleased at this flattery, I changed the subject, and dismissed it from my mind, until it was afterwards brought back to my recollection under circumstances the most painful.

* * * * *

Being in the command of a detachment at some distance from York, I was surprised one morning by Mellish, who possessed all the levity and ardour of his country, entering my room, and, abruptly exclaiming, “Deerhurst, as I rode out here to breakfast, preparatory to bidding you farewell, as to-morrow I set off for Cork, (I

grieve to say, on account of my poor mother's illness) guess the discovery I made."

"You must give me some clue first," I answered; "is it any thing that concerns myself?"

"That is all a matter of taste," he replied, gaily; "but, to end surmise, that noble-looking residence overhanging the romantic dell, with its extensive lawn sloping down in a fine bold sweep to the river's bank, and the well-stocked deer park at the left, are Sir Egbert Eastville's. Why look so stupid, Freville? Don't you recollect our stopping the other day near the gate to look in at the pheasants who were stalking about as graceful and proud as so many demoiselles in a ball-room, and in as much security as if they had never heard a sportsman's shot, and you and I wishing to have one or two good ones at them? Now, Freville, do you remember?"

"Perfectly," I replied. "Has this Sir Egbert given us permission to shoot on his premises?"

"He would see us to the devil first," cried Mellish, impatiently; "but he is husband to the beautiful Lady Eastville I mentioned to you as being Mrs. Onslow's friend."

"True," I said, languidly; "and now, may I ask, what is all this to me? Has Sir Egbert left his card at our mess? Or has he only visited old

Chilli,—a safe companion for his lady, but a bad specimen of our corps ?”

“He has done neither,” said Mellish, “for at present his lady is from home. Besides, I understand he seldom visits the military, and when he does, merely gives them one or two stately dinners, repulsing all intimacy. Shoot on Sir Egbert’s manors, indeed—what an absurd idea !”

“Don’t be angry, Mellish,” said I ; “but really you appeared so excited, I concluded something pleasant had occurred. However, I will ride into York with you.”

“I thought,” he replied, good-humouredly, “that you would be delighted at being in the neighbourhood of the beautiful Lady Eastville. Of course, as a single officer, within three or four miles of him, Sir Egbert must call on you, and they say, when he pleases, that he can be very agreeable and hospitable.”

“And, your head being full of Irish romance and adventure, you expect I am to fall in love with her Ladyship. Is Sir Egbert a second Mr. Mc Misserton ?”

“As yet I know nothing about him ; but we can inquire from Chilli, who seems to know all the Yorkshire people.”

I dined that day at the mess ; some strangers were present, so Mellish and I feared to draw out

Chilli's wit, at times very gross, and by no means attic; but in a negligent way I inquired of a gentleman who sat next to me if he knew Sir Egbert and Lady Eastville. He replied intimately, that she was a very lovely woman, but grave, religious, and so domestic, that she seldom entered into society, being devoted to a family of young children. On hearing this last remark, Mellish, who was attentively listening, shrugged his shoulders, muttering, "When a woman has a pack of children, away with all romantic ideas—they destroy the illusion;—so, Freville, waive the lady, and stick to the pheasants. Any chance of a shot there?"

Smiling at Mellish's notion of the non-romantic, I again addressed the gentleman, by remarking what a quantity of game appeared to be on Sir Egbert's demesne, inquiring was he liberal with it?

"Not particularly so," he answered; "though he keeps a fine pack of hounds, and often treats his friends to a stag hunt, to which he invites the whole neighbourhood, and generally entertains them sumptuously; but on the whole, Sir Egbert is a man of literary and domestic habits, one who enters company as a duty he owes to society, more than from any pleasure he finds in it."

"Is he not a very old man?" I remarked.

“By no means,” was the answer; “on the contrary, I should say that he is scarcely eight and thirty, and, though not critically handsome, is generally considered so. I can assure you, Mr. Deerhurst, that he is one of the most esteemed and influential men in our country, though, I must admit, not the most popular, as his manners are cold and stately, besides, he rather shuns than seeks popularity.”

Mellish again gave me one of his knowing looks, muttering, “No chance of any game in that quarter.”

Soon after the gentlemen retired from the mess, and I then learned that the person I had been conversing with was Doctor Jerold, the most intimate friend of the Eastvilles.

On the following morning Mellish set off for Cork, having first—being hard up for cash—sold me a bargain his favourite horse, called Red Bess, a famous huntress. On selling her to me he explained her excellence on all points but leaping, at which she was somewhat awkward, giving me advice how to manage on such occasions. This I ridiculed, for, though Mellish was considered the best horseman in our corps, indeed one of the most active and graceful I ever met, still I was too vain to acknowledge his superiority, and longed for an opportunity of proving

mine. One soon offered : Sir Egbert Eastville returned to his place for a few days, and was accompanied by some friends and a foreigner of rank, and, though the season was unfavourable, desirous of entertaining them, he invited the whole neighbourhood to a *déjeuner*, to witness the enlargement of a stag, and several of the party to dine with him after the hunt. On this occasion he sent cards of invitation to Colonel Chilli and the other officers of our corps ; but, as he did not pay the compliment of calling in person, we somewhat haughtily declined his hospitality ; still, a few of us, impatient for the sport, rode to the hunt.

Even at this distant period I can recal to memory the enlivening scene which led to such sad results. The morning's sun, though too warm for the exercise, shed its brightest hues over the wide expanse of country through which we galloped. The stag was the largest and swiftest I had ever followed ; the hounds in excellent order, and the Yorkshire gentlemen mounted and equipped in a style that would have graced a royal *cortège* ; yet even amidst them I flattered myself Red Bess and I were worthy of notice. Always speculating on the prospect of coming in for some of Sir Roger's rupees, I had fallen into the destructive habit of running bills and borrow-

ing money ; and priding myself on good taste, always turned out in what I considered a superior style.

It was a splendid run ; the stag bounded over hill and dale, not leaving a trace of its light footsteps. Men, horses, dogs, united for the moment by the universal sympathy of destruction, rushed impetuously after him. Now the doomed animal dashed through a narrow branch of the Ouse, then rushed up the overhanging hills ; again hearing the hounds at his feet, after running through a wide sweep, it fled down to the lowlands, where some fields of corn well enclosed, gave a hope of eluding its unrelenting pursuers. The excitement now became too powerful for resistance. The fences were very high, and in some places overtopped by quickset hedges. These afforded little impediment to the dogs, who burst through them ; but the hunters were obliged to ride round to seek for the best spots for leaping. As to me, in my hurry, forgetting Mellish's advice, I attempted to spring Red Bess over a ditch ; but she breasted, fortunately for me. Although under mental excitement, I became weak, almost to imbecility ; in personal danger I preserved the greatest presence of mind ; so feeling the brute rolling backwards, I made a powerful effort to dash myself to one side, so as to escape her weight falling on

and crushing me. This, probably, saved my life, but I met with a severe accident : my head coming in contact with the stump of a tree growing out of the ditch, received a slight contusion ; and my left leg, over which the haunches of the animal rolled, was broken.

These accidents caused me considerable pain, and in some degree confused my senses ; still I retained an apprehension of my danger, and, dreading every moment to be trampled on, I struggled to roll myself down into the gripe of the ditch, but was unequal to the attempt. I then called aloud for help, but my voice was lost in the loud cry of the hunters—"The stag is at bay—the stag is at bay." It seemed that, finding itself exhausted, faint, and unequal to continue its flight, it had turned proudly round to face its pursuers, and all panting as it was, and hopeless of escape, struggled to revenge itself on the yelping hounds, which had conquered its nobler nature. Already two of them had been gored to death ; the boldest of the huntsmen then galloped forward to see to the safety of the pack, while others, more timid, attempted to rein in their steeds. At the instant I heard a horseman approach towards the place where I lay ; I made an effort to rise and warn him off, but fell back in the effort, and for some moments objects became indistinct ; but I after-

wards learned that Sir Egbert Eastville, who was riding to the very spot where Red Bess had breasted, seeing me on the ground, and finding it impossible to check his hunter, had at no small risk sprung from its back, and, giving it the whip, it bounded over me, clearing the ditch. He then raised me in his arms, and called loudly for help. I was now sufficiently restored to be conscious of what was passing. In a few moments a gentleman came up, exclaiming :—" Ah ! Sir Egbert, how is this ? I saw your horse dash by alone, and guessed you had fallen ; not seriously hurt, I hope !"

Sir Egbert in a peculiarly mild voice explained that he had alighted to afford assistance to a gentleman whom he feared had received a serious injury.

" Ah ! I am glad it was not you," observed the other, carelessly ; " positively the hunt was worth a man's life. I have been hunting for upwards of thirty years, and have never witnessed such a famous run. But d—n it, Old Dick Collet, as usual, beat us all. But this time he has suffered for it, for, just as he alighted to give the *coup-de-grace*—a custom he would not neglect to save his estate—his favourite hunter, Wildfire, fell down dead ; and there is Old Dick blubbering like a schoolboy over the carcase, and swearing at

the dogs, vowing they shall never feast on Wild-fire, and Doctor Jerold in his dry jocose way advising him."

"Doctor Jerold, do you say?" cried Sir Egbert, interrupting him: "how fortunate his being at the chase!"

"Catch him at that!" replied the other, "moreover, this confoundedly warm weather! No; but just as the stag was stalked—for there was no other way of getting the animal down—he drove up in his gig on his way to York."

"How very fortunate!" repeated Sir Egbert, in the same mild voice; "would you be so kind as to ride over to wherever he is, and desire him to hasten here, for I much fear this gentleman, who appears a stranger, has broken his leg."

"A d——d awkward horseman he must have been; for when he first entered the field, Collet and I were struck with the strength and beauty of a bay mare he was mounted on. I fancy he is one of the officers quartered in York."

"All this time he is suffering," said Sir Egbert, in an altered tone; "and, as it might fatigue you to call Doctor Jerold, if you promise to remain here till my return, I will run myself for him."

This had the desired effect: the Nimrod of thirty years' standing, humming Bright Chanticleer, rode off, and in a few moments returned

with Doctor Jerold. Explanations again took place, I made an effort to thank Sir Egbert, and give some account of myself, but the Doctor, who was examining the contusion on my head, which he pronounced to be trifling, prohibited me from speaking. He then, even on the spot, bled me and set my leg, after which, in that familiar tone which proved how intimate he was with the proud Baronet, told him in a low voice—but which I overheard—that he had met me at the mess, considered me a very gentlemanly, agreeable person, and that he understood from my commanding officer that I had been in Egypt, and had distinguished myself at the storming of Alexandria. This, no doubt, gave Sir Egbert a favourable impression, for he instantly said, “If you think removing him to York would be attended with pain or danger, let him be brought to my house. By going through the orchards we are scarcely half a mile from it; there he will be more convenient to you, Jerold, and during our absence his being at the Terrace can be no inconvenience. Lady Eastville does not propose returning for a month, and by that time I should suppose he will be quite recovered.”

“Not quite,” answered the Doctor; “however, Sir Egbert, I really think removing him to York might be attended with danger, nor do I,”

he added, in a friendly voice, "consider that the noise of a barrack-room would tend much towards his recovery."

"Then," replied Sir Egbert, "I shall ride forward, and give orders to prepare for his reception; and remember, Jerold, you dine with me."

He answered gaily, "I never forget venison and claret."

Sir Egbert laughed, and, mounting a horse his groom led, rode off. Soon after I was laid on a litter, and conveyed with much care to his splendid residence. Arrived there, I was placed in a chamber situated in the left wing; but, though the most distant from the dining-room, as the evening advanced, every now and then my slumbers were broken by the loud merriment of the hunters.

Early on the following morning Doctor Jerold entered my apartment. I was much pleased with him; to scientific knowledge and skill he united a happy humour, and great kindness of manner. After examining my head and broken limb, he gave me numerous directions, to which he begged I would carefully attend, adding, he hoped to see me next day, but was then obliged to attend his patients, several at a considerable distance. "By the by," he continued,

"I must not forget to give you Sir Egbert's polite message, requesting that you will order all things here as if it was your own house. He would have paid his compliments personally before he went; but I prohibited him, as quiet is downright necessary to your restoration."

"Has Sir Egbert departed so early?" I demanded.

"Ay, two hours ago," he answered. "Lady Eastville has had a slight cold, and he is such an uxorious husband, that he is quite miserable till he returns to her. Good encouragement to bachelors like you and me, Mr. Deerhurst, to marry!"

I smiled, observing, "I understand Lady Eastville is very beautiful—at least when she was staying in the neighbourhood of Chatham she was considered so. However, I had not the good fortune to see her, as I was in Cumberland on leave."

"She can scarcely be termed beautiful," he answered; "indeed, it is injustice to call her so, for then when people see her they may be disappointed; but Lady Eastville is lovely, for an angel's goodness shines through her every feature." At the instant the servant announced that his gig was at the door, so, shaking me by the hand, he departed.

The next three weeks passed drearily enough. The contusion on my head proved more troublesome than the Doctor had anticipated; my leg was greatly swollen, and I was very feverish. This affected my nerves, which were weakened to such a degree that the slightest noise startled me, and worse, my mind became haunted with frightful dreams and presentiments. I am particular in mentioning this, because it helps to account for a scene which otherwise must appear affected or over-wrought; and still in this detail of myself, far from any exaggeration, I will try to control the full expression of my feelings.

CHAPTER XVI.

As soon as the fever, resulting from the irritation of my broken limb, had abated, by the orders of Doctor Jerold, I was laid on a couch, which was gently rolled into a small, but elegant apartment adjoining the sleeping room into which, on my first arrival, I had been carried. No place could be more happily adapted for an invalid: its large windows, reaching to the ground, opened on a wide terrace, commanding an extensive view. Near the house it was adorned by the most fragrant and richest plants: roses and flowering myrtles forced their way through the opened sashes, contending for the prize of beauty with foreign plants—many of which I did not know even by name—their more delicate perfume yielding to the scent of the climates, whose white blossoms, intermingling with the bright scarlet of the trumpet-honeysuckle, hung in fantastic drapery above them. The front of the terrace sloped off towards the lawn, its vivid green

relieved by small knots of American shrubs, or baskets of geraniums, removed from the conservatories at that genial season; some of the most precious of these were placed near my window. Below, lay the noble river, its clear waters thrown into relief by the wooded hills that rose almost perpendicularly from its edge, their rugged sides enlivened by deer and numerous rabbits. Near the couch on which I reclined, stood a dumb-waiter, weighed down with every delicacy Doctor Jerold could suggest as likely to please my waning appetite, and with which my noble and hospitable host took care I should be supplied; at the other end was placed a small table covered with books, pamphlets, papers, prints, &c., &c.; and, as the night closed in, the small glowing wood fire, and the soft light of lamps, in vases of the purest alabaster, replaced, and not ineffectually either, the bright morning sun, and the elaborate bowers of myrtle and roses.

This description may appear trivial and uncalled for; but I would, if possible, convey to the reader's mind the peace and happiness of that mansion—of that family of whom I was the fell destroyer! Oh! God, infinite in thy wisdom, unbounded in thy goodness, how surpassing—beyond man's comprehension, is thy mercy, when

such a wretch as I dare even in penitence approach thy footstool ! But Thou, my Redeemer, who rejoicest not at the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live, hast not disdained to hear my prayer. These memories of the past are too painful, I cannot proceed.

* * * *

Again I resume my narrative. About a month might have elapsed since my accident, and in despite of every attention I suffered from nervous fever, whose effects led to an event apparently unworthy of notice, but which subsequently, in concatenation with others, helped to work out the evils which I once impiously imputed to the irreversible decrees of an unrelenting destiny. Alas ! even to the righteous it is sad to think on what mere trifles our worldly prosperity depends ; the calculations of human wisdom are but dust in the balance against the tide which drives us on to fortune, be it for weal or for woe ; and this, which on a casual view may appear unjust or mysterious, is solved by the great *truth*, that in heaven alone can we anchor our hopes of happiness. To quit my digression, though willingly would I loiter,—so much do I dread the detail of coming events ;—I received a letter from Charles Mellish, in which, with all the enthusiasm of his warm affec-

tions, he entered into a description of his grief for his mother's death,—repeated many proofs of her self-denial, practised to enable him to purchase a lieutenancy, to which he would be appointed in the next Gazette; he then alluded to our school-boy days in Cork, and all the changes which had since taken place. This letter deeply affected me, and increased the fever under which I laboured. I sunk into a kind of uneasy slumber: fearful dreams haunted me. I thought I was hurling Clara down a steep precipice at Cader Idris; that she grasped at my knees, calling on me to save her. I awoke from the torture of my leg: a gentlemanly, stately-looking person, holding up a child in his arms, was standing at my bed-side; the face of the child was bent over me, as the curtains were nearly closed; the light was dubious, it appeared to my confused and troubled fancy, that it was Clara, of whom I had been dreaming. Yielding to a sudden impulse, starting up, I clasped the child in my arms, muttering: “Clara—beloved Clara!”

Terrified at my vehemence, with a cry, the child escaped, nearly rolling off the bed; while Sir Egbert Eastville—for it was he—inquired, proudly:

“Mr. Deerhurst, what is the cause of this strange emotion?”

Ashamed of my childish folly in yielding to a delusion, I was muttering some excuse about dreaming, raving, and so forth, when my embarrassment was relieved by the entrance of Dr. Jerold, who, on feeling my pulse, expressed his vexation at finding me so ill. Here, Sir Egbert joined in his regrets. To be brief, a few days passed on, and during these, the proud Baronet paid me unremitting attention. My fever passed off. It was the fourth evening, when entering my sitting-room, at an unusually late hour, he said :

“Mr. Deerhurst, I have a request to make of you—it is quite a nursery tale. I have just received an account from Lady Eastville, who is staying with her two elder children at a friend’s house, some miles distant, that they have been seized with measles of a virulent description; under these circumstances, she will not permit Herbert—her pet,” and he smiled, and pointed to the boy who had caused my emotion, “to join her. Unfortunately, I am obliged to attend some magisterial business in York. Now, as a conclusion to my most unromantic tale, I must acquaint you that Lady Eastville disapproves of the nurse now in charge of Herbert: her being so for the last few days was a mere chance. Should I be presuming too far, Mr. Deerhurst, to request, that during my absence,

you will sometimes permit Herbert to remain with you? It will be a protection; and you will find him useful to fetch and carry. Won't you, Herbert?" he exclaimed, leading the bright child towards me. As he did so, for the first time, I remarked Sir Egbert's appearance. He was above the middle size, slight, but of very erect carriage. His hair was of a light brown, with a tinge of yellow;—his complexion fair to delicacy, but relieved by full whiskers. On the first view his countenance was tranquil, but more closely examined, the deep set eyes were expressive of subdued passions, and at times there was an expression of scorn in the indenting of his short upper lip. His manners were pleasing though distant; he impressed one with the idea of a person possessed of fine sensibilities, fastidious to refinement, attentive to all the forms of politeness and etiquette, surprisingly so for a man of his extensive information.

Reaching out my hand to Herbert, who bounded towards me with the most engaging familiarity, I assured Sir Egbert that I would pay him every attention, and that I would prove an excellent nurse. I then expressed my grateful sense of all the kindness I had received. He seemed pleased with my ready acceptance of Herbert whom he charged to be a very good boy, and then departed for York.

In a thousand little ways Herbert won on my affection. It was pretty to witness his love and care of my broken leg ; he would lay his hand so gently on it, kiss it so tenderly, shake his head with such solemn pity ; then fixing his intelligent eyes on mine make me tell him of the naughty horse that had thrown me. But I need not explain the thousand ways by which infancy entwines itself to the heart ; the most callous cannot remain insensible to the sincerity and warmth of childish affection, yet alas ! in this sinful world, even this pure sentiment is alloyed by the reflection, that often in after-years the heart of the parent is wounded by the indifference, the disobedience, the selfishness of the once beloved child.

About a week had passed since my first introduction to Herbert ; every day I became more attached to the little fellow. In the interval Doctor Jerold had twice called at the Terrace, to examine my leg. He acquainted me that Sir Egbert's daughter was out of immediate danger, but continued very delicate, and that Lady Eastville suffered much from anxiety about her. At the end of the week Sir Egbert again came, and remained for a few days. He said it would be some time before he returned, for he was going to Lady Eastville, and then that an imperative necessity obliged him to proceed to London, but he hoped

on the following month his family would be well enough to accompany him back, when they would all be so gay and happy ; and even if I were quite recovered, that I should remain to partake of their pleasures. My attention to Herbert had won his gratitude, and I found him one of the most pleasing companions I had ever met. In general, from the stateliness of his carriage and the studied politeness of his address, he appeared to strangers proud and distant ; far from it, his mind was too exalted, too dignified for pride or affectation ; but he possessed a tone of high feeling which rendered his opinions of honour and of women perfectly chivalric. Aware that his ideas on most subjects were too highly wrought for general society, and might expose him to ridicule, from which his sensitive mind shrank with horror, he became reserved, except to the favoured few who ever found his conversation unique, interesting, and instructive ; for he was a man of letters and acquainted with almost every Court in Europe. His love for Lady Eastville and his children was perfectly enthusiastic ; never was any person more calculated to enjoy domestic love, or render his home a terrestrial paradise ;—but the awakening of one fell passion blighted all.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON the following morning Jerold joined us, and we spent two days agreeably. In taking leave, Sir Egbert again commended Herbert to my care; and the Doctor, after giving numerous directions about my health, observed, "that, as he was going to visit a distant patient, he would not be able to see me until the following week." It was then early in August, the weather exquisite, and my leg so far recovered, that I was able to hobble out on the walk beneath my window, which opened to the ground. Charmed by my crutches, Herbert insisted on getting a pair, and I found amusement in observing his delight at imitating my lameness. Thus we continued until about the 15th, and in three days more Jerold was expected. It chanced that the day was unusually hot, and Herbert complained of head-ache, and appeared oppressed, imputing it to the weather; this caused me no anxiety, and in the afternoon when a breeze got up, I took

him out. At first he appeared cheerful, collecting blossoms, or bounding forwards, as he observed the gambols of the fawns on the distant hill, or clapping his little hands as he heard the screams of the rooks, who were flying towards a distant grove. Suddenly he threw himself on the grass, complaining of fatigue ; with difficulty I got him to return, and, placing him on a couch, again resumed my walk, but had not proceeded far, when I was alarmed by hearing him utter the most piercing cries. I hastened back in an alarm, which was increased by perceiving his attendant lying on the ground with her clothes on fire. I concluded she had fallen down in a fit, but soon discovered it was the result of intoxication. Having extinguished her dress, I rung the bell violently ; it was answered by a footman equally intoxicated ; this was the more provoking as I found that Walter the butler, the person to whom Sir Egbert had entrusted the care of his place, had gone to York. I ordered that an express should be sent after him, for I was ignorant of Sir Egbert's address.

Though these measures somewhat calmed my fears, I spent a restless night ; the exertions I had been obliged to use inflamed my broken limb, and Herbert was very feverish, which I solely imputed to the terror he had suffered.

Early on the following morning Nelly Dudgeon, his attendant entered, to offer many apologies for her intoxication of the past evening, entreating that I would not expose her by sending off for Walter; but, as on inquiry I learned it was her constant habit, and that beside she was a woman of a violent, cruel, temper, I received her overtures sternly, declaring my resolution the moment Doctor Jerold, or any other person who had authority in the family arrived, that she should be dismissed. Even then she tried to conciliate me; but, provoked at the annoyance and danger which had resulted from her inebriety, I treated her with the utmost severity, commanding her not to approach Herbert, who should remain solely in my apartments until another attendant was procured. Then she yielded to a fury, which convinced me the accounts I had received of her temper were not exaggerated, and I found some difficulty in getting her to leave the apartment. Having done so, I dismissed her from my thoughts as a being too insignificant to awaken more than a momentary anger.

The day passed heavily, Herbert continued very ill; we had no attendant but the footman, who was troublesome from his officiousness and apologies. Towards evening Herbert became alarmingly worse, raved incessantly of being on

fire, calling in lisping accents for his mamma; my position was very embarrassing, when I found some relief in the arrival of Walter. He had lived with Sir Egbert for several years, and in his absence had full control over the other servants. He told me that Nelly had been recommended by Lady Aylsbury, and for that reason, though not approved, Sir Egbert did not wish to part with her; but that except on emergencies she was never entrusted with the care of the children. He then offered to set off immediately for Dr. Jerold, and, in the event of missing him, to procure some other physician. Afterwards we consulted on the propriety of acquainting Lady Eastville, and at length concluded on doing so, since, should Herbert die, it would in some degree prepare her for the shock, and relieve us from the responsibility. Soon after Walter departed, and I sat down by the couch in a very melancholy mood, for I thought poor Herbert was dying, and he had so gained on my affections, that I felt a father's anxiety about him.

Thus I continued with little intermission till about nine in the evening; by that time his sleep appeared more calm, and, as the air of the room was very sultry, I resolved to take a few turns on the terrace, and had just arranged my crutches for the purpose, when I heard a chariot drive up

the avenue a moment after, and the door of my apartment was gently opened, and through the dubious light I saw a female form glide rapidly forward, cast a wild look around, and then rushing to the couch, kneel beside it, and with suppressed sobs press the hands of Herbert to her lips. This, of course, must be Lady Eastville, and I rejoiced at her arrival, and looked to Jerold's entering, but he did not come; and there I continued standing in the recess of the window, considering what I should do.

I heard Lady Eastville in a low subdued voice utter a prayer; after which she arose, and, as she approached the bell, her figure looked tall and graceful. I was aware that my remaining unknown to her was awkward, and to step forward might be an intrusion, so I made an effort to push open the glass door, purposing to go out on the walk; in doing so my crutch fell, and I was obliged to look for support. Startled at the noise, she advanced, exclaiming aloud:—"Who is there?" I made no answer, and, shaded by the drapery of the curtain, she saw me not; but, as the evening light fell upon her face I had a full view, and, merciful Heaven! in Lady Eastville I beheld Clara Arnheim, my first, my only love, she from whom neither absence, nor circumstances, nor time, could wean my thoughts. Had

I obeyed the impulse of my soul, I should have sprung towards her, and casting myself at her feet worshipped my soul's idol ; but my emotion was too violent for my exhausted frame ; the current of my blood rushed to my head, then retreated to my heart ;—a dizziness seized me, and for some time I was incapable of moving, then catching at the furniture for support, I staggered forward. She was again kneeling by the couch, her head buried in the pillow, but I saw her bosom heave as Herbert's slumber grew more feverish ; yet, even then I only thought of myself, and stooping over her I whispered " Clara—but no, pardon me, I should address you as Lady Eastville ; after the lapse of so many years may Freville Deerhurst hope to be still remembered ?" She started up exclaiming :—" Do my senses deceive me, or is it indeed my own dear cousin Freville who is here ?"

Aware of my deep feelings, I had addressed her with studied coldness ; not so Clara, her countenance brightened with pleasure, and she took my hand with friendly warmth. I was too much agitated to speak, but she was quite calm, and as I persevered in my silence, she said tremulously : " You look very sad, Freville, do you think my angel child in danger ?" and she burst into tears. Her natural emotion roused me to a sense of my selfishness. I strove to reassure her by imputing

Herbert's illness to terror ; I recapitulated the scene that had occurred, speaking of Nelly Dudgeon's intoxication and insolence with the utmost asperity, and concluded by expressing my surprise that such a person should be retained in the family.

She answered mildly, "The fact is, Freville, Lady Aylsbury, who you must know is in many respects a very whimsical person, for a long time kept this Nelly as a kind of confidential servant ; and afterwards, as I strongly suspect, finding her an incumbrance, and wishing to get rid of her, pressed her into my service, requesting I would retain her in it until she returned from Frankfort whither she was going. There is so much low dissimulation in Lady Aylsbury's character, that in spite of her position, I believe her capable of any meanness ; heretofore I thought Nelly of so little consequence, that I would not run the risk of offending Lady Aylsbury by dismissing her ; but after the scene you have just described, on Sir Egbert's return, she shall quit the Terrace." I was strenuously advising her to that effect, when to my astonishment, Nelly stood before us ; it appeared that she had followed Lady Eastville to the door, with the intention of making excuses, but not finding the opportunity, had remained there, closely observing and listening. Being no longer able to command her fury, she

cried out : "My Lady, only listen to me ; it is a shame for you," she added, addressing me, "after all the trouble you have given in the house, to be finding fault and abusing a poor servant who has no other dependance."

"This is intolerable," exclaimed Clara, rising and commanding her to retire.

"Let her first hand me my crutch," said I, who was rather amused at witnessing Nell's fury. As she handed it to me she muttered between her teeth, "I wish your leg might break in two ; and so you are my Lady's cousin ? Well that is strange !"

"Still loitering here," said Lady Eastville, "go instantly and send Mrs. Waller." She retired grumbling, and Clara again resumed her place near the couch : she sat on a low seat so as to watch more attentively Herbert's breathing. I placed myself on a chair opposite to them, then with the simple benevolence that had ever marked her character, she arranged cushions to support my leg, after which for some time we remained silent. She had cast aside her bonnet and pelisse, and as she half reclined against the arm of the couch, with her long hair thrown back, her soft eyes anxiously fixed on Herbert, and her cheeks glowing with maternal affection, methought I had never seen her look so lovely, and I turned my

head aside that she should not observe my gaze of rapture.

After a time she broke silence, saying : “ Freville, will you not be glad to see Waller again ? When my marriage took place I sent for her to Wales, and it would be hard to say which of us felt most happy at the reunion.”

“ Is it possible, Lady Eastville,” I answered, “ that it is your old nursery governess or housekeeper that has now the care of your children ? Strange that when I heard the name it did not occur to me ; and how kind of you in your prosperity to think of past friends !”

“ Kinder than you, Freville !” she answered in a playful tone, “ when you call me Lady Eastville and not Clara. But in remembering old friends the kindness is to myself, for it promotes my happiness, for they are associated in my mind with my dear father, Cader Idris, and all the bright hours of childhood. No, I never can forget the friends of my youth ; and then you know, Freville, or you ought to know, that my ideas of happiness were always domestic, and amidst the prosperity to which you allude, I find my greatest charm in my affections, for Egbert’s love is more valuable to me than all his treasures of fine places, houses, and their adjuncts.”

I bit my lips to smother a sigh, and as I must say something, observed, "I thought it was a Mr. Lascelles you married *so soon* after my departure from England." I laid a great emphasis on the words *so soon*, but she did not notice it, and merely replied, "Sir Egbert and Mr. Lascelles are one and the same; some other day you shall have the particulars. And now let me ask where is your beautiful and beloved Aigline Tennant?"

"Married like yourself, Clara," I replied in a tone of agitation.

"Oh! dear Freville, I am sorry," she said soothingly, "I feared you were unhappy from your looks."

I interrupted her, petulantly, exclaiming, "For Heaven's sake, do not again speak to me in this manner of Miss Tennant—she never was my love." She smiled incredulously, and put her finger to her lip to imply silence; at the instant Mrs. Waller entered. I greeted her with much pleasure, and in an under voice we talked and laughed at Clara's being a mother, "And this little fellow," said she, "is the pet."

"I fear so," answered Clara. "And now, Waller, carry him to my room."

"I would not, on any account, disturb him from that sleep," was the answer; "besides, my

Lady, as you are resolved not to separate from him, I must arrange his little bed next to yours," so saying she retired.

Then Clara began to speak of the inhabitants of her native village, of whom she gave me a full account. Poor Clara, her nature was so affectionate that neither circumstances nor time ever taught her to forget a friend or neglect a charity. About two in the morning the child awoke, he was then removed, and I retired to my chamber, but not to rest—my spirits were in a tumult, in a perfect ecstasy at being under the same roof with Clara, and seeing her so happy and so nobly settled ; the last few hours had been full of interest, and I strove to find my happiness in reflecting on hers ; but towards morning self again predominated, and I felt grieved and jealous as I reflected that she was the wife of Sir Egbert. At length I fell into a slumber from which I was roused by the entrance of Doctor Jerold, he told me Herbert was dangerously ill, and his only hope of him was that measles began to appear.

I was sincerely sorry at this intelligence. That night the doctor remained, and for the next three days was in constant attendance ; during this time I only saw Clara twice as she entered to make some inquiry of Jerold, who sat with me. At these periods she was much agitated by her

apprehensions, but spoke kindly, and said she feared that from the confusion and anxiety that reigned in the house, I must be cruelly neglected. Well, two days more passed, and Herbert was pronounced out of danger, and Jerold ordered that on the following day he should be removed to my sitting room for change of air.

“Besides,” said he, “now that from my long sojourn at the Terrace I shall be so hurried, having my two patients together will save time—nothing like killing two birds at one throw.”

Thus, without any effort on my part, by circumstances the most simple and natural, and over which I had no control, I was thrown into the society of my beloved Clara,—our intercourse rendered more interesting by the sympathy we mutually felt for the child.

Days passed quietly on. Oh ! how impatiently I watched for the hour when Clara, carrying a basket and her work, followed by Waller and Herbert, came to take up her station in my room, generally remaining with me till the dinner hour ; occasionally she would be called away to receive the numerous visitors who came to inquire after the children. This was a sad annoyance, but I was consoled when I heard her pronounce such constant intrusion a great bore. I often pressed her to dine in my apartment, but this

she declined, observing that Sir Egbert was so particular in the regulations of his establishment, that he never permitted the least innovation in the forms of etiquette, and that even when alone she sat down to table surrounded with the style of a duchess, and had the comfort of a fat butler and a pair of tall footmen observing with what appetite she ate. Once or twice she invited me to join her and abscond from my cell, as she playfully called my apartment; but I declined, for if once I went through the house I knew I should have less of her company, and so persisted that Doctor Jerold had advised me not to move; however, inconsistently enough, I admitted that I was able to walk upon the Terrace, though I still required the assistance of my crutch.

The autumnal evenings were delicious, and when Herbert sunk into sleep, Clara would accompany me, pluck for me the most beautiful flowers, and with her father's skill explain their properties; but all this she did with the simple tenderness she used to shew her reverend parent; all idea and recollection of my past love seemed to have faded from her memory. Alas! these days—these walks—this solitary intercourse, revived in my mind the passion of my early years. Aware of its hopelessness I sunk into a profound melancholy, which communicated itself to my manners

and appearance. She was not slow in observing the alteration ; imputing it to ill health, the result of my broken limb, she exerted a thousand little arts to cheer and amuse me, thus innocently increasing my cursed passion ; and now my imagination, always so vivid, began to busy itself. I was curious to discover whether her union with Sir Egbert had been one of convenience or affection, and I indulged the hope that it might have been the former, and that the love which I flattered myself she had from childhood experienced for me, was only subdued, not conquered.

In personal advantages I considered myself far superior to Sir Egbert, and overlooking his high intellectual powers, of which to say truth I was then very incompetent to form a just estimate, I plumed myself up with the recollection that many women of taste had been captivated by my fashionable manners and easy address, and that Mellish and others of my brother officers, had termed me the irresistible. I ought to blush to acknowledge such folly ; but as I have not shrunk from exposing the faults of my parents, it would be a culpable weakness to suppress my own.

I frequently led Clara on to give me an account of her marriage, and what her feelings were at the period ; at first she laughed, saying, I should be

tired of her company if she turned egotist; and when I persisted in my importunities, with an honest simplicity, which for the time confounded all my hopes, she avowed her strong affection for Sir Egbert at the period of her union, adding,

“That affection has daily increased from my knowledge of his many noble qualities, and,” she sportively added, “from what you, Freville, will consider a capricious cause, that in a hundred trifling ways, which admit of no description, he reminds me of my ever to be remembered and respected father. Then, in his carriage and address, both of which I know are too formal for your fancy, he is so like Mr. Aylsbury, who, until my marriage was my beau-ideal of manly perfection! Nay, Freville, do not look so fierce, you know Lady Gertrude was my friend, and many a night she kept me from my rest while she expatiated on his perfections, so, perhaps, I only admired him by reflection.”

I felt provoked and mortified, and sarcastically observed, “Mr. Aylsbury, no doubt, is an excellent person; but positively, Clara, your beau-ideal of manly beauty is perfectly absurd, the man is downright plain in his appearance; even Sir Egbert is better-looking.”

“Even,” she repeated gaily; “but you were ever saucy, Freville, it may be bad taste, but I

always admired Egbert ; however, I was not thinking of personal beauty, and if I dwell upon mind and all that, you will call me a saint or say I am prosy—so we will, with your leave, change the subject.”

“And yet,” said I, pointing to Herbert who was playing about, “you are proud enough of that child’s appearance.”

She saw I was out of humour, and without penetrating the cause, wished to soothe me, so playfully pointing her finger, she answered :

“Oh ! you vain man, it was but yesterday that Waller said to me, ‘ Well, my Lady, surely never was a child so like a father as Master Herbert is to Mr. Deerhurst, and he is so unlike you and Sir Egbert.’ ”

“And do you think him like me, Clara ?” I demanded with emotion.

“I do,” she exclaimed, and raising him in her arms she stroked his head, saying, “This hair is as black as the raven’s, and these eyes are so like yours,” and she pressed her lips to them.

This conversation afforded me little pleasure, not that I had any premeditated plan of gaining upon Clara’s affections ; but I was jealous of the praise she had given Mr. Aylsbury, and dissatisfied at the indifference she displayed for personal advantages, when put in competition with mental

acquirements. I wished, indeed, to construe the kisses she lavished on Herbert, at the moment she commented on his resemblance to me, to incipient feelings of regard ; but, alas ! even my egregious vanity could not be so self-deceived.

The morning after this conversation had occurred, Doctor Jerold came to the Terrace, and remained until evening. Clara, as was usual with her, was very cheerful, but I felt dissatisfied, languid, and depressed ; the Doctor imputing my too evident dejection to the solitary life I led, benevolently requested of me to accompany him back, observing that as he was a bachelor he would allow me to make his house my own, and entertain as many of my brother officers as I pleased, on the condition that I kept my leg quiet. A pang of anguish shot through my heart at the idea of leaving Clara, still I was going to accept the invitation, when she abruptly said :

“ At all events, Mr. Deerhurst, do not think of going until Sir Egbert returns. I will write to him to-morrow to hasten back ; you must not quit the Terrace with a gloomy opinion of it ; now that you and Herbert are well, I purpose being very gay ; besides, I must introduce you to my little girl and elder son,” on saying these words she quitted the apartment.

“ I see there is no chance of your accompanying

me now," said Jerold; "nay, I will not even press you, for it would be uncourteous to the Eastvilles; however, when you do leave them, I shall put in my claim; and now, farewell; whenever I come here, I am sure to loiter away my time."

It is needless to say with what pleasure I continued my stay, enhanced as it was by the secret belief that Clara's invitation proceeded from a warmer feeling than mere hospitality. In a few days Sir Egbert's answer arrived; he said it would be impossible for him to return to the Terrace for two or three weeks, but requested that I would not think of removing, and then expressed his thanks for my attention to Herbert, of which he had received an account from Jerold; he also desired that Lady Eastville would not bring home the other children until his arrival.

Thus, again, I was left to the uninterrupted enjoyment of Clara's company; but the pleasure was blighted by the knowledge that when Sir Egbert came back, I could not with any propriety intrude myself any longer as an inmate in his family; so following my father's reckless maxim of enjoying the present, I yielded myself without an effort to my passion, till it obtained a complete mastery over me. Then came compunction and something like remorse, and shame at the hopes

I was nourishing; but these sentiments were soon absorbed in schemes for the attainment of my object, and the hours of rest were devoted in calculating by what means I could most delicately insinuate to her how much I loved, without startling her prejudices—for such, in the profundity of my folly, I considered her exalted views of Christianity. Surely mine was then a demon's part, to try by every artifice to seduce the confiding, noble-minded Clara from her husband—her children—her God—to hurl her from her high state to the abyss of shame, and misery, and guilt! And for what? Merely to gratify my own selfish views; and yet I dared to shelter my wickedness under the name of sentiment—of an early and unconquerable passion; and to defend it by dwelling on the frequency of the crime, which argument, except to my unreflecting folly, was the strongest proof against it, as it demonstrated the terrible effects of evil example, and the necessity of checking such licentiousness.

Although I was sufficiently well to quit my apartment, I still continued in it under the plea of illness, for I could there better enjoy Clara's society than in the saloon, which during the mornings was generally crowded with company. Yet, in truth, my illness was not affected, for my

health faded from the violence of my uncontrollable feelings, and the terrible conflict of my mind. My sufferings were depicted in my countenance; Lady Eastville perceived it, as she now marked my pallid cheeks, and then saw them flush with scarlet; a pang shot through her heart, for she was attached to me with a sister's love,—and knowing that consumption was hereditary in my mother's family, she apprehended I was threatened with it, and privately sent off an express for Doctor Jerold. When I discovered this, I was much annoyed, even the proof it gave of her interest did not reconcile me, for I began to suspect that every one must observe my passion, and as the Doctor was very quick and apprehensive, I dreaded his discernment; however, on this point I had nothing to fear. He arrived that very evening at the Terrace: pronounced me to be in a slow nervous fever; desired that I might be kept as quiet as possible, but still amused; ordered the windows of my sitting-room to be kept open till the close of the evening; then gaily observed to Lady Eastville, that as he could not spare his time to humour hypochondriacs, he deputed the care of me to her and Herbert. Being about going to York, from whence he could not return for a week or

two, and considering me worse than I really was, he privately gave Lady Eastville many directions, admitting that my illness showed some symptoms of hectic fever; above all things he requested my spirits might be supported. Thus circumstances combined to nourish my passion, and propel the unfortunate Clara on to ruin.

There is no possibility of conveying to the mind of another the numerous devices by which I strove to inspire the pure mind of Clara with my detestable love. I assailed her through her best and noblest affection :—I would affect head-ache, and speak of approaching consumption, that with trembling fingers she might bathe my temples with sal-volatile, or bring me some cooling draught. I would hush Herbert to sleep on my bosom, entwining his arms round my neck, that when her anxious tenderness wished to remove him from the air without awakening, she should stoop over me and disengage him from my embrace. All this time, reclining on the couch, I would appear quite passive as if overcome with lassitude, though truly “the strong blast of hell with restless fury drove my spirit on.” Often would I engage her in long conversations about her father—a theme her filial heart never tired of. Good old man, thy hallowed memory was drawn

from the silent tomb to assist towards the ruin of thy beloved daughter !

When the night closed in, and the beautiful landscape without was lighted by the harvest moon, knowing the powers of music, I would breathe forth from my flute the softest, most impassioned airs, or sing the songs of infancy till the tears streamed down her eyes ; and sometimes she would beg of me to desist, for the memory of her father, and the Parsonage, and old Cader Idris became painfully vivid. If any of the attendants entered I complained of irritation of my nerves, and peevishly observed, that I was aware of being an incumbrance or intruder. Accustomed from childhood to attend upon and soothe the sufferings of others, incapable under any circumstances of selfishness, with an angel's goodness she humoured all my whims. Still she sometimes gently rebuked me for indulging my irritable temper, as she apprehended, if not controlled in time, it might become habitual, and render me less amiable. Viewing me as the companion of her youth, her near relation, and my being the only person who was connected in her mind with past days, she treated me with all the tenderness and confidence of an affectionate sister. Guileless as one of her own children, the very idea

of guilt or passion never occurred to her. My hand trembles as I record another of my contrivances for keeping her in my room. On many an evening when she was about to visit some of Sir Egbert's tenantry in the immediate village, to which she was very attentive—on quitting the room, I would call her back, and gravely ask her to read some passages in the Bible. Oh ! the look of delight with which she waived every other employment in the blessed hope of winning me to holy thoughts. Although she had no voice for singing, her reading was quite melodious ; and when speaking upon religious subjects there was an expression of enthusiasm in her countenance which lighted up her delicate features to the very perfection of beauty. Of all the persons I have ever seen, Clara was the most truly sublime. She seemed the very creation of heaven. Her spirit was of God—was with God ; how could it be otherwise, for from the source of revealed religion she imbibed the waters of life ! Hour after hour she would read to me, commenting on every passage she thought most likely to awaken me to a sense of piety. Among the many little attentions she paid, was the preparing of delicacies with her own hands, thinking they would please my palate. With her bewitching smile she would

say, " See, Freville, I do not forget my old employment of housekeeping, so I rose early this morning to have this jelly seasoned in the manner you were wont to approve of at the Parsonage. There, Freville, do you remember how carefully I was obliged to lock up all my sweetmeats, lest they should suddenly disappear when you came in hungry from the keen air of the mountains?" She would then playfully force me to eat, and remind me of all the assistance I had, in boyhood, given her in domestic affairs and in catechizing the children. To my distorted imagination, these reminiscences of our past pleasure seemed to result from a deep, though hidden passion.

Lady Eastville was still more beautiful as a matron than she had been in her girlish days; for the proportions of her frame were more fully developed, and the expression of her countenance was more intellectual. In dress she was much the same—the materials might be finer, the fashions different; but still the white robe and blue ribbons were the constant costume; and the luxuriant hair worn in the same Madonna fashion. When at my request she would by night kneel at the side of my couch to pray, with her bright child beside her, I do think the genius of sculpture or painting never imagined a more perfect spectacle; and yet so great

a wretch was I, that my sole ambition was to usurp the place of all goodness in her pure bosom. My conduct at this period seemed to illustrate the strange belief entertained by some of the earliest Christians, that the rebellious spirits who had been degraded from angels, were occasionally permitted to roam upon earth, assuming the forms of sinful men, and thus endowed with terrible power to seduce the virtuous from their trust in heaven.

The most sublime of English poets has represented Lucifer as being so over-awed by the graceful innocence of Eve, as to hesitate in the dire work of destruction; but the baser spirit that rules the libertine, bent on its own sensual gratification, pauses not in its dire purpose. What to him is the breach of hospitality, the ruin of innocence, or the disgrace of a family when put in competition with his grovelling passion? Perhaps my profound selfishness cannot be placed in a stronger light than by acknowledging that, for several evenings I had caught glimpses of some of the servants, among whom I recognised the bloated visage of Nelly Dudgeon, peeping at night-fall through the blinds. There was also a sneering expression on the lips of the footman who brought in my meals, when he would sometimes say: "My Lady requests, Mr. Deerhurst,

that you will partake of these," handing me some rarity.

I was not at a loss to construe all this. It fretted me to think Clara was suspected by the menial crew; still, far from acquainting her with my observations, I trembled lest she might discover the suspicions of her servants. I knew her delicacy would be shocked and alarmed, and that no arts, no sophistry would influence her to continue our intercourse, which on her side was the result of early habit, and a purity of sentiment unacquainted with guilt; besides, she had too much sense to despise opinion. She knew she owed a duty to society at large, more especially to those who formed her family, and might be influenced by her example.

It may be asked if my knowledge of her virtue was so exalted, and her conduct so irreproachable, upon what hope I founded my plans of seduction? To this I can give no reasonable answer, so repeat the well known lines :

None without hope ere loved the brightest fair,
But love will hope where reason would despair.

One day Clara said to me: "Freville, if I thought you were sincere in the affection you express for my dear father's memory, I would shew you a miniature I have painted of him."

I reproached her for doubting my candour.

“Oh! Freville,” she answered, in a tone between gay and serious, “latterly you have in some degree lessened my confidence, and destroyed much of the pleasure I find in your company by your eternally tormenting me with your compliments. No doubt they are very gallant and soldier-like; but between such near relations, to say the least, they are very absurd. Flattery is a bad, nay, a vulgar substitute for the exchange of our natural sentiments. And now, Freville, as usurping a sister’s authority, and a matron’s wisdom”—and she gave one of her angel smiles—“I am lecturing you, believe me that the bold look which you so often assume destroys the effect of your naturally fine eyes. I assure you, that I have been frequently quite uncomfortable from your fixed regards.”

As she spoke, a sickness passed over me, for I felt that the least advance would be the breaking off of our intimacy; and so madly did I love her, that the most painful death conveyed not an idea of such despair as living to be separated from her.

The ghastly expression my countenance assumed, shocked her. Full of the noblest sensibility, she shrank from inflicting pain. “Nay, Freville,” she said in a tone of gentleness, “I did

not mean to wound your feelings ; forgive me for having done so."

I tried to laugh, and answered : " Clara, you make no allowance for a military air ; however, in future I will school my looks to the primness of a miss in her teens, if it so please you. Now say how you, who I thought had never been taught to draw, could from your memory paint a miniature of your father ?"

She replied with vivacity : " Love performs miracles ; you know how tenderly I always loved my poor old father, and when it pleased heaven to deprive him of sight, his patience, his piety, his cheerfulness under the terrible affliction, doubly endeared him to me."

She paused to recover her emotion, for tears fell down her face. " Freville," she then said, " it has ever been my good fortune to be blessed in my immediate friends. Sir Egbert, having frequently seen me attempt a likeness of my father, from a masterly sketch your mother had drawn in the old family bible, and being always solicitous to gratify my every whim, advised me to take some lessons in painting, and generously took me to London for the purpose. My master, who, like you, Freville, could flatter, vowed I was born to be a first-rate artist ; and when you see miniatures I have taken of Sir Egbert and the children,

you must admit that there was a small spark of genius in Clara Arnheim, who, when you were a boy, you often saucily said possessed the first of charms—that of having no pretension to excellence in any pursuit.”

“I was not a gallant soldier then, Clara,” I answered gaily; “but shew me the pictures ere I recal my praise.”

“Oh, they are kept by Sir Egbert as his dearest treasures. You must know, though a husband, he retains all the romance of a lover.”

I sighed from very envy and jealousy, making no reply.

“But, Freville, be a saucy boy again, and out with the plain unvarnished truth; and say what do you think of this?”—with these words she drew from her bosom a miniature, fastened round her neck with a chain of my mother’s hair. It was an admirable and highly-finished likeness; but what cared I for the old man’s memory? The picture, however, I pressed to my lips passionately, for it was warm from her bosom. Considering this as a compliment to her father, she seemed much pleased. Hastening from the apartment, she returned in a few moments with Mr. Arnheim’s old Bible.

I could not mistake its tarnished morocco cover and broad silver clasps. Opening the valued relic,

she showed me the sketch taken by my mother. She then pointed out all the marginal notes, some of them written at the period of her own mother's death, and others dictated by Mr. Arnheim, after his loss of sight. They were full of genius and poetry—the sublime poetry of true piety. Well my hypocrisy now brought into play this holy volume, as another auxiliary for detaining Clara in my chamber,—for my hope of gaining her love was quickly fading.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ANOTHER week passed on in the usual manner, and then a letter arrived from Sir Egbert, to say he hoped to be at the Terrace on the following day but one. He was then staying in the house with his little girl, who Doctor Jerold considered might with safety accompany him back, and hoped change of air would recruit her strength, which was much debilitated.

On receiving this letter, Clara bounded into my room with a look of brilliant happiness. "Congratulate me, Freville ; my beloved and my dear little girl will be with me to-morrow. The three first days must be exclusively devoted to them ; we shall have so much to say after our long absence ; and then, Freville, I shall assume a command over you, and insist upon your quitting your cell, and joining us."

Horror-struck at Sir Egbert's expected return,

frantic at her undisguised rapture, a momentary madness seized me. I uttered a cry, made a spring towards her. As well as I can now recal the fearful sentiment, I had some idea of crushing her to death ; anything to keep her from my rival. Fortunately, most fortunately, I staggered, and fell back in a fit.

She knelt by my side, called loudly for assistance, and in a few moments I was restored, but languid and exhausted from my mind's agony. My illness awakened no suspicion, for the preceding evening I had complained of being very feverish, and spoke of my death as a coming event, just to detain her near me ; and yet, in saying I was ill, there was no deception, for the constant agitation of my mind was attended with a hectic, which was rapidly undermining my strength. When restored from my fit I cried out :

“ Leave me, Lady Eastville, leave me ! prepare for your Lord's return. I am ill, and dying, and cannot be expected to join in your transports of love and happiness.”

“ Oh ! Freville,” she said, and her tears fell on my burning face, “ mar not my joy by the grievous idea of your being in danger. Doctor Jerold will be here, and then you will soon be well again.”

“ Leave me,” I exclaimed fiercely, “ if you would not drive me to madness—to hell !”

She shuddered and retired ; in a quarter of an

hour after Mrs. Waller entered with a composing draught, which poor Clara, thinking I raved, had prepared. She found me more calm. At her urgent request I took the anodyne. She settled me on the couch, drew the window curtains, and I soon fell into a slumber, from which I awoke more tranquil, but exquisitely miserable. Mrs. Waller that day attended with my dinner, consisting of light delicacies, and soon afterwards Clara entered with Herbert. Tortured by my miserable jealousy, I was peevish and ill-tempered. At first she strove to soothe me, and then gravely rebuked my want of patience.

“My dear Freville,” she said, “now that Sir Egbert is returning, I shall have less opportunity of lecturing, for when he is here our tastes are so similar we are constant companions; so, profiting by the present opportunity, I must tell you how much I both condemn and grieve at the irritability of your temper. Formerly, Freville, although a little too ardent and opiniated, you were proverbial for good humour and a sportive manner; but now you are so capricious there is no possibility of pleasing you; and then, when not pleased, you become peevish and desponding. Let me, with all a sister’s love, entreat of you to conquer these defects, which otherwise will mar the many noble qualities you possess.”

I answered fiercely: “Lady Eastville, you lay

a great stress on a sister's love ; thank heaven, no such relationship exists between us."

Mistaking my object, with her usual gentleness she replied : " Our mothers were sisters, so the relationship is only one step removed. Freville, I did not think you would refuse to acknowledge me."

Abashed by her look of reproach, I answered : " But, Clara, fortune has now placed an impassible gulf between us. You are the lady of a proud Baronet, mistress of this noble mansion, and all its adjuncts of fine carriages, servants, &c. &c., and I am but a poor Lieutenant, who probably must quit even that position for want of means to liquidate debts incurred by stern necessity."

" Freville, I blush for you," she replied, in a tone of indignation I had never before heard her use ; " I blush for you, to lay such a stress on the possession of fortune, setting aside all the nobler, more exalted gifts of nature and religion. Think you, Freville, had Sir Roger Deerhurst appointed you the heir of his oriental treasures, and that Clara Arnheim had remained the dependent and orphan daughter of Mr. Arnheim, that she would have felt herself degraded below you ? Such was not the doctrine we learned from our departed mothers. Descended from the noble houses of Vermani and Villemont, when they were reduced to poverty and compelled to subsist by industry,

they still preserved their independence and dignity, and in the eyes of the truly noble, such as Lord Plinlimmon and his family, were as much esteemed and respected as if surrounded by all the attributes of state."

The general expression of Clara's face was mildness, but on rare occasions, when she was awakened into enthusiasm, she was surpassingly lovely. At that moment I could not have retained my self-command had I continued to gaze on her. Leaning my face over the table, I disguised its expression; but a convulsive sigh escaped from my overburthened bosom.

Again her too quick sensibility regretted having wounded me. "Dear Freville," she said, "I am too hard on you; I do not make sufficient allowance for your faded health, or the privations to which Sir Roger's persevering cruelty exposes you. Alas! it is a sinful world: with all my efforts to be virtuous, to guide my whole being by religion and the precepts of my pious father, I constantly err. Prosperity has hardened my heart, and in the fulness of my happiness I forgot your less fortunate destiny. Forgive me, Freville, and credit me, my spirit yearneth after heaven, but my flesh is weak. You do not answer," she continued, with emotion, "and I cannot forgive myself for fretting you; but when I saw you so fond of prayer, of detaining me to read this holy

volume (and she laid her hand on it), I expected you would soon be a perfect saint. Then I came here to have a little confidential chat, and to ask your advice; I was disappointed, and then, forsooth, accused you of the very irritability I experienced myself. Say you excuse me," and she reached out her hand.

I caught it in a transport of passion, and pressing it between mine, actually sobbed with the vehemence of a school-boy.

"This is terrible," she said, sitting down on a low stool at my feet; "Freville, I am positive some secret grief oppresses you. This idea has often suggested itself to me, and Dr. Jerold has sanctioned my opinion, by saying much of your late illness proceeded from some mental cause. I will not press for your confidence; circumstances of affliction may have occurred that you would not wish to relate. It may be that the secrets of Aigline Tennant are in connection with your own, and it would not be just or honourable to betray them. But I claim the office of a sincere friend, who would sacrifice much to soothe—to serve you."

I looked sadly in her face, and pressed her soft hand against my throbbing breast, muttering some words of gratitude. She withdrew her hand, and in a voice of touching tenderness continued:

"Freville, you will not permit me to call you

brother, but still I am your nearest relation, your playfellow in infancy, your companion through many an hour of joy and sorrow. Think you that Lady Eastville can forget the kindness that Clara Arnheim received? Well do I remember, when I lost my father, how, out of your small means, you would have supplied all my wants; and would you not, to save me from a dependence which your prouder spirit deemed insupportable, to the ruin of your fortunes and to the disappointment of your love, have united your fate to mine? And can you now think so slightly of me as not to demand, nay, command my services? Oh! Freville, how cruelly you misjudge me, or, perhaps, for your mother often said, when you were a child that you inherited a spice of her father, of Signor Vermani's vindictive spirit, you resent my not having invited you to my wedding, and for keeping our relationship secret from Sir Egbert, and declining your correspondence. Now, Freville, this is, in point of fact, the only act of my life which I severely condemn and regret; but you know at the period I was solely under the protection of Lady Aylsbury, Sir Egbert's aunt, and weakly submitted to her guidance; in short, I had no choice of action." She sighed deeply, and said, "and it is on this very subject I wanted your advice when I came here this evening."

"Let me then, Clara," I exclaimed, with viva-

city, "entreat your forgiveness for my unmanly violence, and your confidence; as to the sincerity of my love for you, methinks you cannot doubt it."

"I never did, Freville," she answered, with perfect *naïveté*, "and now I must turn egotist, and speak of myself. It matters not what my sentiments were towards Sir Egbert when first I knew him. They bordered a little too much on respect, and a conscious inferiority, for Lady Aylsbury, who had just sense enough to appreciate his value, and was most proud of having such a nephew, for months ere he returned to England had been amusing her friends with an account of his superior talents, the court he was paid in all the first societies in Europe, the magnificent collection of paintings and articles of *virtù* he had collected; and for this she prudently condemned him, as he had incumbered his fortune—at the period not exceeding fifteen hundred a year—to gratify his taste for the fine arts. Observe, I had been married two years when Sir Egbert, by the death of three persons, all younger than himself, came in for his baronetcy and the large estates now in his possession, with no obligation but that of taking the name of Eastville. To return to myself. As you may conclude, I considered the much-vaunted nephew of Lady Aylsbury as a very great personage. So impressed was I with this idea, that on our first

acquaintance I felt a restraint in his presence actually amounting to awe. However, when Lady Aylsbury got seriously ill, he was so attentive to her, and showed so much real good feeling, that I soon ceased to fear, and learned to love him. Not to tire your patience, the proud, the fastidious, the accomplished Mr. Lascelles, to the surprise of all who knew him, proposed for Clara, Lady Aylsbury's humble dependent; it is needless to say I accepted him. So far all was well; but I shall ever look back with regret for having yielded to Lady Aylsbury's request, and never mentioned your name to him—you, who were my nearest, I might say, only relative; for, until I became Sir Egbert's bride, the haughty Villemonts never deigned to notice me."

"Then, Clara," I said, "it was at Lady Aylsbury's request you declined all correspondence with me. What could be her motive?"

Blushing scarlet, she answered; "Lady Aylsbury, who is a strange compound, is a great romancer, and delights in imagining love scenes for others. She had heard a vast deal of you from the Plinlimmons, and chose to fancy that you and I must of a necessity be lovers. Insincere to a degree in her own manners, she places little belief in the truth of others. In vain I assured her all the attachment we experienced towards

each other was that of a brother and sister ; and that you had been impelled to propose for me, not from passion, but a noble wish to relieve me from dependence. She insisted on knowing my sentiments better than I did myself ; and, as she really behaved in the most friendly and generous manner, on Sir Egbert's, then Mr. Lascelles's, proposal, I weakly yielded to her advice, and for the first time stooped to the meanness of deception."

I replied coldly, " I should think there was no great deception in not speaking to Sir Egbert of a person he never knew, nor do I see any cause of regret."

" It was a want of confidence," she replied with vivacity ; " and see the result. By his letter of to-day I perceive Sir Egbert is surprised and evidently annoyed at hearing, for the first time, that I have so near a relative."

" You then wrote him word of our relationship ?" I exclaimed.

" Yes, in my last letter. In my two first I alluded to nothing but Herbert's danger ; the subject was so engrossing I could think of nothing else."

I made no reply, and she continued to speak with an energy very unlike her usual tranquil manner.

" Lady Aylsbury was perfectly right in forbidding our future correspondence. It was also kind

of her to advise me to assume a grave and more distant manner than was natural to me, and to acquaint me with the proud and jealous temper of Sir Egbert. To say truth, Freville, the pure and simple manners of my early friends in the neighbourhood of Cader Idris were little calculated to make me suppose any evil passions could be imputed to a free and friendly intercourse with our acquaintances. Alas! for the corruptions of society, how much of good it deprives the innocent."

"Sir Egbert then," I demanded, "is of a jealous temper?"

"Beyond belief," she answered. "It is the dark shade that dims his character, in other respects so exalted. But for this there is every excuse:—in the first instance he is so ardent in his attachments, which are concentrated in a few, that his whole happiness is placed in those he loves. Next, the ill conduct of his own mother who, after being ten years married, eloped from his father with the profligate John Fitzwilliam, so famous on the turf, has left an evil impression of our sex's truth on his mind."

"Clara, I was not aware of the circumstance."

"It is seldom spoken of," she answered. "The deserted husband, the criminal wife, and profligate seducer, are all dead—it was a terrible tragedy. I will not speak more fully of it. Lady

Aylsbury, who confided the fearful secret to me, has obtained my promise on that head." As she spoke she turned deadly pale, and shuddered. After a time she added: "Lady Aylsbury, though but his step-aunt, and so many years his senior, on Egbert being left an orphan, acted towards him as the most judicious and best of parents."

I said I should not have supposed that possible from what I heard of the frivolity of her manners and pursuits.

"It is hard to judge of others," she replied carelessly. "She has some fine qualities, though they are nearly lost in the multitude of contemptible ones; however, I could overlook all but her deception."

"Was Sir Egbert ever jealous of you?" I demanded.

She answered indignantly, "What an idea! Knowing his temper, even had I been the vainest coquette, I would instantly have adapted my manners to his views; duty, independent of affection, would have impelled me to it. Jealous of me! Why, Freville, since we married I was never so long separated from him as now, except once; I think about three years ago, when I spent some months in the neighbourhood of Chatham with Lady Aylsbury. And a melancholy time I had of it, for she was confined for nearly the whole period with rheumatism. Sir Egbert was obliged to go

to Scotland, on account of a law-suit. Positively though little used to indulge *ennui*, 'I should have died of the vapours, for my little ones were not with me, but for Janet Owen; you remember the Doctor's pretty daughter who lived in Plinlimmon, and was such a playfellow of ours? Well, she married a Mr. Onslow, a merchant; and though I knew Sir Egbert's ancestral blood would rise at the very idea of his lady forming an intimacy so little aristocratic, still I spent many an evening with Janet."

"Then," said I smiling, "you kept a second secret from Sir Egbert?"

"No, Freville. On his return I told him, and although he took some capricious dislike to Janet, he assisted in getting her husband, who was very poor, some situation in America; and Janet is now residing in New York, and gaily mentioned in her last letter, that she liked it better than England's more ancient city—"

She paused, for we heard a noise as if some person had stumbled near the door. "Who waits?" called out Clara. There was no answer. She rose, and opened the door. I saw a form flit past the window. Clara returned, and said carelessly:

"Do you know, Freville, I have a very ill opinion of Nelly Dudgeon. Waller never ventures to speak to me without first looking whether she is in the passage leading to my apartment. I

hope she did not hear what I said of Sir Egbert's mother ; for, however guilty or unfortunate, her memory is so dear to him he cannot endure to have her mentioned. Indeed, all connected with her is now buried in oblivion."

While she was speaking, the dressing bell rang. Taking Herbert by the hand she retired, observing with great gentleness: "You must not expect me this evening, Freville, for I must walk down to the hamlet to see about orders Sir Egbert is solicitous to have executed."

I was going to speak, but playfully waiving her hand, she hurried off, saying: "I will not be coaxed."

I did not see her again until the following evening. Twice during the day she sent Herbert with kind messages to say I must excuse her, as she was engaged preparing for Sir Egbert and her little girl. I knew the former, although in many respects so amiable, was fastidious to peevishness in his tastes. The morning passed away slowly and sadly. I felt that Sir Egbert's return would deprive me of Clara's company. I knew that if any incipient jealousy was awakened, I could on no pretence prolong my stay ; my separation then from Clara, was certain, immediate ; the thought was accompanied by a depth of anguish to which no expression can do justice, and to which the

regret I felt, when obliged to part from her at Cader Idris, was but as a shadow, for then I hoped circumstances would again bring us near, perhaps, unite us. Even my grief, when I heard of her marriage, was calm to the sufferings to which my guilty and hopeless passion now doomed me. But in this detail it is not my intention to dwell upon the struggles I endured—it would answer no object. Human sympathy—even if I could awaken it—would afford no consolation to my wounded spirit. One by one my heart's idols have crumbled to dust before me ; for years one object has been the only tie which united me to earth, and my reason tells me, although he may be the source of my happiness, that he will seek and find his in other objects. All this is as it should be, and drives on the desolated heart to seek its only anchorage in heaven.

It was about six in the afternoon, when Lady Eastville, accompanied by Herbert, entered my apartment:—"I am come to spend the evening with you, Freville," she said, in a tone of touching softness ; and methought her countenance looked sad and subdued.

"While I thank you for your condescension, Lady Eastville," I answered, in a proud, cold tone, "forgive me if I say it was not sisterly to so entirely neglect the heart-broken invalid, who, probably, will never again spend a day in your

society; for, even were I to intrude here any longer, you will be too happily engaged with Sir Egbert and your children, to spare your time to me, who, in truth, may be said to be merely an object of your charity."

"This, to me, Freville," she said, soothingly; "but I will not reproach you, for you are unhappy, nor will I deceive you, as I before remarked. Sir Egbert acts the lover, and in all his rides and walks I accompany him; however, I hope to enjoy much of your society. Doctor Jerold is to attend my little girl here, and I have no doubt that he will exert his authority, and oblige you to quit your cell, and join us in the general sitting-rooms."

I felt miserable and dissatisfied, and haughtily answered:—"No, Lady Eastville, I feel that I am an intruder. Thrown by circumstances on Sir Egbert's hospitality, it is my intention to accept of Doctor Jerold's invitation, and quit the Terrace to-morrow; for, to say truth, I do not feel able to join my corps." Angels of mercy! why did she, then, with that melodious voice, whose every tone sunk into my heart, commiserate my illness? Why did she press me to stay, and add to the happiness of her domestic circle by my presence? And how could I for a moment impute the tenderness that emanated from benevolence

and affection, to a passion furious as that which consumed me? But all originated in my execrable and deeply-cursed vanity."

"Mamma, Lady Cora is come," lisped out Herbert, bounding in through the window.

"Freville, come and look at Sir Egbert's favourite," said Clara, as she stepped out on the Terrace walk; "I assure you this is the only lady I am jealous of," and she pointed to a splendid mare of dappled grey.

I had never seen any horse of such a perfect form. Supported by my stick, I stepped forward to admire it, and speak to the groom, who told me it was a famous racer, and that Sir Egbert had refused nine hundred guineas for it, and that it was so obedient to his hand, that he might guide it with a silken rein, but that few others could venture to ride it. Soon after I re-entered the room, and observed Clara sitting on the sofa, and looking very pensive. She started up, and without speaking hurried away. An hour elapsed, and she returned with her bonnet and shawl on.

"You must accompany me, Freville," she said, "to see some beautiful plants Sir Egbert, who knows my love for flowers, has forwarded from London all strangers to Britain's clime; so we must be very tender of them."

I rose to accompany her.

“I am so glad you can move without crutches,” said she, smiling. “As to your stick, you look quite graceful with it.”

We passed through a spacious hall hung with fine pictures, representing sylvan scenes, and from that into a magnificent saloon opening into the conservatories. Every thing bespoke wealth, directed by good taste.

“The library is the most elegant apartment in the house,” said Clara, who was pleased at my admiration; “but as it is up stairs, I will not permit you to see it, lest it might fatigue your leg to ascend. Then I have a boudoir, Freville, that would suit an Eastern Princess. Strange vicissitude to place Clara Arnheim, who thought it a fine thing to get a few yards of blue ribbon, at the head of all this grandeur, and with nothing on earth to recommend her!”

“Nothing on earth to recommend you?” I exclaimed, as I gazed on her exquisite beauty.

“No fine speeches,” she added, as she passed through the conservatory to the Terrace walk, which extended to a great length.

For some time we observed silence. Clara appeared embarrassed by it, and attempted to enter into general conversation; spoke of the pictures, the exotics, of Lady Cora, in short, every subject she could think of, and looked

disappointed when in reply I uttered some monosyllables. For the life of me I could not converse on topics of indifference, while my whole being was engrossed with my ill-fated love. However, as we strolled up and down—for she refused to quit the walk—I occasionally stopped to remark on some of the plants, then she would pluck their blossoms, and present them to me; and thus another hour passed, and the depression of my spirits every moment increased. My melancholy seemed infectious, and Clara's cheerfulness gradually faded away. She became almost as sad and pensive as myself. Complaining that the dew was falling, she proposed returning to my apartment, and I readily assented.

On entering we found Herbert jumping about in high glee, which I perceived originated in my table being covered with some rare fruit and sweetmeats, in addition to my usual coffee and biscuits.

"I could see no just cause, Freville," said Lady Eastville, gaily, "why you should not come in for some of the good things. Do not all these rustic preparations, and the vases of flowers remind you of the dear Parsonage? Come, recline on the couch, you look fatigued. Herbert shall be the attendant page, and I the Lady Paramount, doing the honours of my banquet."

I tried to look pleased, said I was too well to

require the couch, and, sitting down beside her, attempted to partake of the delicacies before me, and to speak on general topics. In this effort I was assisted by Herbert, who now twined his arms round his mother's neck; then bounding from her, caressed me, and so on, till exhausted by the flow of his spirits, he nestled his dark head into her bosom, and fell into a deep sleep. For some time she remained silent, fondly gazing on him; then in a low voice, as if apprehensive of awakening him, she said:—

“Now, Freville, I must renew the subject I commenced yesterday. I do not ask why you are unhappy, but I request, nay entreat of you to acquaint me, can I be of the least service to you? I need not again expatiate on your claims or my feelings; credit me when I say, that to have it in my power to alleviate your present sorrow, from whatever source it originates, would confer upon me the greatest pleasure. Nay, do not interrupt me with thanks. On this head I am selfish; for how could Clara Arnheim be at rest while Freville Deerhurst was in affliction?”

I pressed the hand she had laid upon mine, to prevent my speaking too passionately, to my lips. She started, flushed scarlet, then grew deadly pale. I should think some suspicion of my sentiments towards her, for the first time, flashed across her mind, and she bent her head

lowly over the sleeping child, to disguise her confusion. Witnessing all this, I fancied it argued well to my hopes of meeting a return, and I gloried at the wild thought of yet conquering her virtue. Still supporting Herbert in her arms, she rose from her seat, and, before I was aware of her intention, rung the bell. A footman entered.

“Remove the coffee,” she said, “and light the lamps; but if Mr. Deerhurst does not apprehend the night air, you need not close the curtains. The twilight is beautiful,” she added, as she stood by the open casement.

The attendant retired.

“I shall put Herbert to bed,” she said, approaching the door.

I felt that I had alarmed her delicacy, and that her countenance and manners were unusually grave; wishing to re-assure her, and draw her back, even for a few solitary moments, in a tone of as much indifference as I could assume, I said, “Will you not delay a few moments, Clara, till I explain the cause of a dejection, which willingly I would never have betrayed to your notice.” She hesitated, looked doubtful. I proudly exclaimed: “Nay, Lady Eastville, let me not detain you. Yet it was ungenerous to press for my confidence, and then deride it. But, alas! no human mind ever yet withstood the influence of prosperity. Our different lots have destroyed your sympathy;

it has pleased Heaven to shower upon you all the blessings of this life, health, beauty, wealth, children, while I am left to struggle with all the pangs of disappointed affection, and to the mortification of being reduced, by poverty, to appear mean and shabby in my regiment, like my poor father. Although the lawful heir of unbounded wealth, by the unnatural cruelty of Sir Roger I am deprived almost of the means of existence. Worse again ! I am involved in debts incurred by the necessary expenses attending on change of quarters, and being sent at the caprice of the Horse Guards from one clime to another. However, regrets are unavailing ; our regiment is under orders for India, and I hope soon to find beneath a tropical sun that grave I now so ardently wish for. If, under these circumstances, for a moment I forget the respect due to Lady Eastville, I can only humbly entreat pardon for my presumption."

I saw her hesitate, but her gentle forgiving nature could not long retain anger or suspicion ; so, laying Herbert on the couch, she laid her hand on my shoulder—for I sat with my elbows resting on the table, and my face buried in my hands—and addressed me in a voice full of compassion :

"Freville, I cannot endure that you should yield to this melancholy. I am certain you will

yet be a rich man. It is not possible that Sir Roger can live much longer; and credit me, he is not so barbarous as to leave you unprovided for. Perhaps I was too irritable in feeling, too angry with you; but, indeed, your manner was too ardent. Let us mutually forgive each other; you know at the Parsonage we often had affronts, and so forth, and soon made up again—am I forgiven?”

Had I obeyed the impulse of the moment, I should have flung myself at her feet, and kissed the ground she trod; but I affected to be sublime, just to hear her pleading accents. Heaven is my witness at the instant I had no other motive. Raising my head, I looked coldly at her, and in a tone of dignity said, “How could the proud Lady Eastville offend the humble Deerhurst, who again apologises for daring to presume too much on her kindness? However, to-morrow I shall quit the Terrace; in a few days join my regiment; so ——,” the thoughts of parting from her were too painful; my affected composure fled again. Burying my face in my hands, a groan escaped me. I saw her shudder, then she drew a chair, and sat beside me, and in low impressive accents said:

“Freville, I no longer press your stay; perhaps” and she certainly sighed, “it is as well for us all that you should go. Your temper is very ardent, and I think irritable; and it now

occurs to me that, considering you as a brother, pitying your misfortunes, and, chance having thrown you under my protection, perhaps, I have devoted more of my time, and been more familiar with you than Sir Egbert would approve. The very idea of annoying him frets me, for I love him to excess — more, I think, than I ought to love any created being. Altogether, Freville, I feel restless and unhappy when Sir Egbert asks why I never mentioned you to him. If I say Lady Aylsbury, from a suspicion of our being attached, prevented me, it will fire his jealous temper to madness ; in short, a presentiment of coming evil has cast its shadow over my soul ! Pray with me to heaven to avert it !”

I was too much agitated to reply. After a time she proceeded :—

“You can quit here with Doctor Jerold to-morrow : he is one of the most amiable of men, and will treat you with all hospitality. In a short time, when you are quite recovered, I am certain Sir Egbert will seek your company ; and if you are fond of hunting, you can command any of his hunters—all famous, except my Lady Cora, her I do not promise.”

My unreasonable temper was provoked at her advising my departure, though I had resolved on it, and I hastily answered, “You are very good, polite, I should say ; but, if my embarrassments

do not compel me to sell my commission—when I see no other alternative but listing as a private soldier—I hope, ere the hunting season, to be far on my way to India.”

She looked reproachfully at me, and said:—
“Oh! Freville,” and burst into tears. At that moment we heard a servant approach; she caught up Herbert, and hurried to the door. “In pity’s sake, Clara,” I exclaimed, springing after her, “say you will see me again this evening. We must forgive each other ere we part—perhaps for ever. Sir Egbert will be here early to-morrow: then adieu to all chance of speaking to you! Leave, oh! leave me not to the remorse of thinking that my ill-temper has displeased, offended you!”

She hesitated, and I placed myself between her and the door.

“Let me pass, Freville, and I will see you this evening, an hour hence, if but for a moment.”

“You promise?”

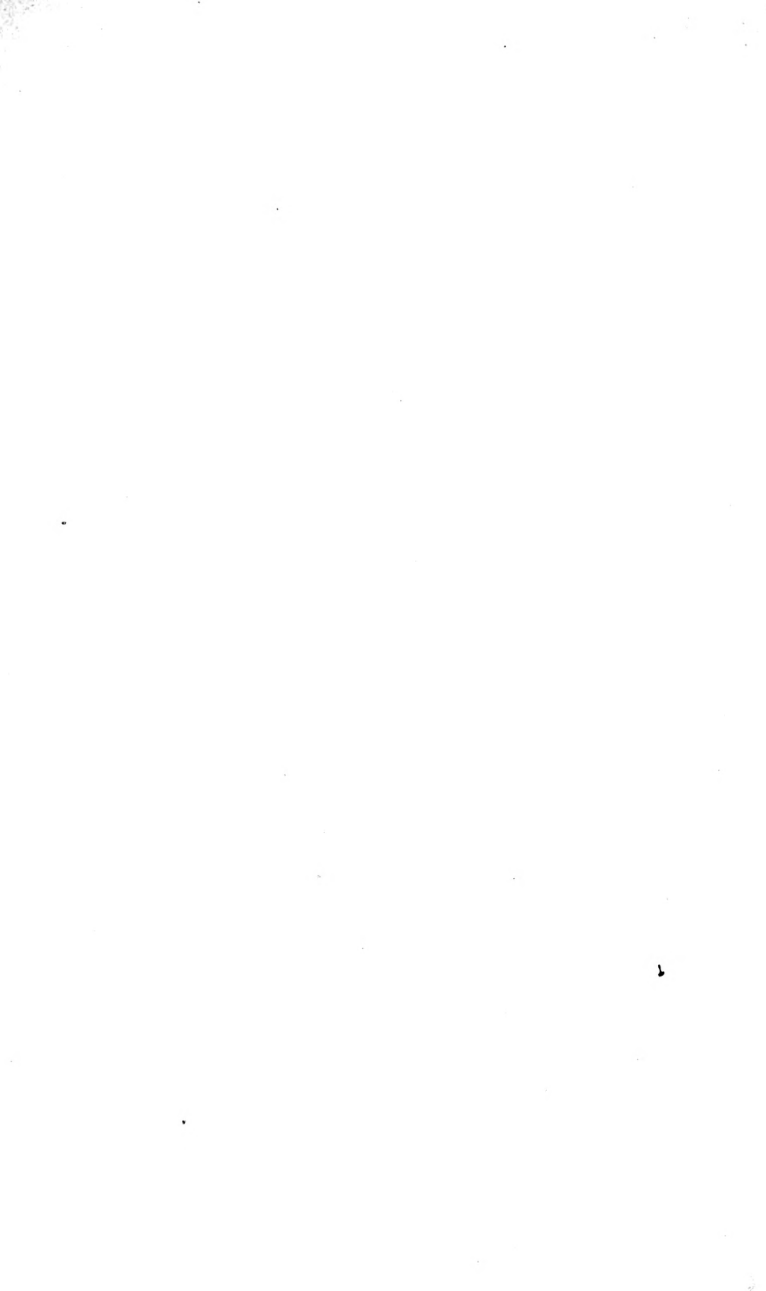
“I do!”

“Enough, Clara Arnheim never broke her word,” before I finished the last sentence she had vanished.

END OF VOL. I.

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